

THE
SCHOOL
FOR
WIDOWS.



VOLUME THE THIRD.



W I D O W S

VOLUME THE THIRD

THE
S C H O O L
FOR
W I D O W S.
A
N O V E L.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By CLARA REEVE,
AUTHOR OF THE OLD ENGLISH BARON,
&c. &c.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. HOOKHAM, NEW BOND STREET;
HARRISON AND CO. PATERNOSTER ROW; AND
W. MILLER, OLD BOND STREET.

M D C C X C I.



THE

SCHOOL

1852

W. I. D. O. W. B.

A



IN THREE

BY CLARA REEVE

AUTHOR OF THE OLD ENGLISH BIBLE

Vol. III.

VOLUME THE THIRD

LONDON

PRINTED FOR A. FROST, NEW BOND STREET,
HARRISON AND CO. STATIONERS, NEW BOND STREET,
W. MILLER, OLD BOND STREET.

1852

THE
S C H O O L
FOR
W I D O W S.

LETTER X.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Have received your concluding packet,
and will now speak to the contents.

I am obliged for your own story, and
declare myself highly satisfied with your
conduct in trying situations. In some
cases it deserves applause, and in others it
claims excuse.

It seems to me, that you never loved
Mr. Strictland well enough to overlook
his faults. I have known some women in

VOL. III.

A

your

your situation, that, by a strong affection, have borne all kinds of ill usage, and still loved their husbands; and others, that knew not when they were kindly treated, but were ungrateful and unjust to the best and worthiest of men. I confess, yours did not go the right way to gain your affections; and that there was great merit in performing all your duties under these circumstances. That he loved and esteemed you, is clear from the last solemn act of his life; and you have done justice to his memory. His will is, indeed, what you have called it, just, generous, and prudent. You have only to observe the duties arising from your situation, to make yourself, and those who depend on you, easy and happy.

I am deeply interested in the memoirs of the Marney family. I respect Mr. Balderston extremely, and think he deserves the epithet which Homer gives to Ulysses — “the much-enduring man.” With
great

great sensibility, and warm affections, he is humble, patient, and resigned to the will of Heaven. This is true Christian fortitude, and cannot fail of it's reward, either here or hereafter. Heaven has raised him up a friend, to support and cherish his old age. He is weaned from the world, and is daily preparing for a better.

I sincerely wish the youth may deserve your patronage and protection : but, remember, the most obliged persons are not always the most grateful. I venture to give you this warning, that, in case you should be disappointed, you may not be surprized.

I honour your noble spirit as it deserves. You have laid in a stock of benevolent actions, that will cheer your heart as long as you live ; and may your life be prolonged for the sake of many !

And, now, I must reply to your last paragraph. I am angry with it : it supposes

me unjust and ungrateful. How ought I to resent it? If I were indeed so, I should not take much pains to answer the imputation; but I will shew my sense of it by a better way—by fulfilling all the duties that such generous friendship enjoins, and which I have given you room to expect. But I waited to see whether you would urge it any farther. You do urge; you insist upon it; and I am going to obey you.

The lady, my friend and companion, will be happy to receive you here; but it is necessary that you should first know who and what she is. Her story is interesting; her trials have exceeded yours and mine: she has been comforted, and restored to reason, and even tranquillity, by kindness and tenderness; and she is grateful, to enthusiasm, to her friend and servant.

You may remember Mrs. Martin's making mention of a sea-faring gentleman, Captain Maurice by name, who first
brought

brought a child to be under my care; and afterwards engaged me to take the care of his lady, who was in a state of insanity.

The fatigues of the school had hurt my health. I wanted air, and exercise, and quiet, to restore me.

I was not desirous to undertake this charge: I wished to know more of the lady, and of the gentleman, first; and whether there were any hopes of her recovery. I asked many questions; and Captain Maurice, at last, gave me a perfect information of the particulars.

Captain Maurice was a stout, thick-set man, with a dark complexion, and thick black eye-brows. His looks bespoke courage and assurance; his manners were courteous, and even polite; he spoke Italian, and that was the introduction to our acquaintance. I met him at Mr. Sorling's; and his wife recommended us to each other.

Upon farther acquaintance, I perceived a cloud of care and anxiety, that hung over his brow, which was afterwards sufficiently explained.

I shall make Captain Maurice tell his own story; and, as nearly as I can, in his own words. You are to suppose him such as I have described, walking backward and forward all the time; sometimes turning towards me, and at others going from me—

“ I have heard much of you, Madam; and, since I have seen and conversed with you, I have found you to exceed all that I was told. There is so much gentleness and candour about you, that I could tell all my thoughts to you, sooner than to any body else.

“ I am a man of many faults, and am now doing penance for them; but I am desirous to repair the mischiefs I have done, as far as lies in my power. I will

convince

convince you of this, by telling you all that relates to the lady I have been speaking of.

“ I was bred a sailor, under an uncle who was as bold a seaman as ever walked between stem and stern. He was in the merchants service; and went to Naples and to Messina, and was in great credit with the English factories at both places. After the death of one of his patrons, he struck out a new course of life for himself. He had observed, that the Italians were very fond of English goods; particularly hardware, cabinet-goods, toys and trinkets of various kinds, and chairs of walnut-tree and mahogany. Those made in Naples are very rude, and old-fashioned; and it is but of late years that they have discovered the superiority of the goods of other countries.

“ My uncle had another nephew, a sister's son, who made two or three voyages

with him; he was of a more delicate make, and of a timorous disposition. I was his favourite, because I feared nothing. After our return to England, he bound my cousin to a taylor in London; saying, he was just good enough for that trade, and he wanted no milk-sops to go with him.

“ I then enjoyed his favour, without a rival: and, when he died, he left my cousin five hundred pounds, to set him up in his business; and to me he left his ship, and the remainder of his fortune.

“ I pursued the track he had marked out for me, and made some improvements upon his plan.

“ I was well known, and respected, both at Naples and Messina. I liked the first place by far the best, and I sometimes staid several months there. I made acquaintance with many gentlemen there. I was often invited to dinner at the houses of the principal merchants; and some people of quality

lity did not disdain to notice me, though they are most of them as proud as Lucifer, and some of them are as poor as Job. They are cruelly oppressed with taxes; and the maxim is, to kick and be kicked. The nobles insult the lower degrees of men; they abuse, and sometimes kill, their servants.

“ I used to brag of English liberty and property. The young men loved to set me on talking; and I, sometimes, was more talkative than wife.

“ One young gentleman told me, I was not a Christian. I repeated our Form of Baptism, to convince him that I was. The silly youth told his confessor all that passed between us; and that the English were not heretics, as he had been told. The confessor was in a rage, and threatened punishment to the Englishman who dared to affirm that he was not an heretic.

“ I had a friend who reported this to me.

He

He advised me to be more prudent in future, and promised to ward off the danger for this time.

“Not long after, the same company tried to get me again upon the same subject; but I had my cue. I told them, I was only a poor seaman, and not a missionary; that I wore my religion in my heart, and would not give offence to any other's, nor would ever again speak upon that subject.

“This behaviour of mine pleased most of the company, and introduced me to the acquaintance of a young gentleman, called Don Antonio di Soranzo; and from that time he sought my friendship.”

Here Captain Maurice sighed deeply; he seemed confused; and, after some hesitation, he proceeded—

“This Don Antonio asked me many questions concerning England; it's laws, it's government, it's liberty. Whether Catholics were allowed to enjoy the liberty of
their

their own manner of worship, and were not persecuted, nor molested?

“ I told him, truly, that we were of a more liberal spirit, and that every man might serve God in his own way: that our property was well secured; and, if people paid all that was due by law, they could not be injured by any one. I mentioned our trials by juries, and all the precious rights and privileges we yet enjoy; and drew the comparison in favour of my own country.

“ Don Antonio desired me to meet him at a certain coffee-house, and he would trust me with a secret of great consequence to him, and consult me upon a scheme he had formed for himself. He named the time, and I was punctual to his appointment; when he told me his story, as follows—

“ You know, that it is the custom of our country to give all the estate to the eldest

eldest son, and to condemn the younger to some profession from the hour of their birth. Thus I was destined to the church, without consulting my genius or inclination. I have protested against it repeatedly, but I could hardly be heard. I had an uncle, who had set an example of resistance to all the younger brothers of the family. He disdained the pittance and the appointment, and went, in the train of an ambassador, to Madrid. He travelled all over Spain; then through France, over the Alps, and through Italy. Instead of coming to Naples, he went to Venice. There he made acquaintance with some young men in the mercantile line; he engaged in their house; and from thence wrote to his friends, and asked for his portion, to employ in business. They execrated the meanness of his spirit, in preferring business to the church or the army: however, they sent the money intended for his service,

vice,

vice, and did not wish to hear any more of him.

“ After twenty years absence, he returned to Naples, rich, and a bachelor. These circumstances rendered him a welcome guest to my father: moreover, he declared an intention to leave his fortune into our family.

“ This good uncle took my part; and my father, not chusing to disoblige him, kept his views for me in suspense, and left him free to give his advice upon them.

“ There was, in Naples, an old lady, whom he had loved in his youth. She was then a widow, and in a declining state of health. He visited her; and, had she been in health, they would have been married; but she declined it upon that account. She had a niece, whom she had brought up from an infant, and adopted for her heir. My uncle proposed, that their friendship might descend to their heirs,

heirs, and that one of his nephews might marry her niece. My father seized the occasion to marry his eldest son: so Don Girolamo was proposed to Donna Hortensia, the lady's aunt. She, like a true parent, said, if her niece liked him, she should make no objection; but it should depend upon Isabella to accept or refuse him.

“ Things were in this situation, when I visited the ladies with my uncle. Don Girolamo had been there, and was permitted to visit, as a candidate for the lady's favour. I liked Isabella from the first minute I saw her: I thought it hard that all the blessings of love and fortune should fall into the lap of the elder brother.

“ We Italians understand the language of love better than those of other countries. I loved Isabella; my eyes told her so, and she understood them: her's did not discourage me to proceed. I resolved to try my fortune. If she preferred my brother,
I would

I would give over the pursuit for ever; but, if she gave me hopes of her preference, I would persevere, and my brother should give place to me: I would try to engage my uncle on my side, and I promised myself success. I visited Isabella almost every day: I found opportunities of declaring my passion. She declared, that she would never marry while her aunt lived; and that she would know the temper and disposition of the man she meant to make her husband. She gave me no denial: she permitted me to visit her, as a candidate for her favour; but she had not yet declared her choice.

“ I met my brother there one day. He thought there was a secret intelligence between her and me: he was enflamed with rage and jealousy; he took a hasty leave, and gave me looks of anger and defiance.

“ When I returned home, he had acquainted my father and my uncle with his suspicions;

suspensions; and I was interrogated, as if I had been before a court of judicature. I confessed the truth; that I loved Isabella, and sought to obtain her favour: that, if she declared a preference for my brother, I would desist immediately; but, if she made choice of me, he ought to do the same.

“ My uncle espoused my cause. He said, it was a fair proposal; that my brother’s eldership gave him advantages enough; and that I was free to pursue my fortune.

“ Don Girolamo was so enraged, that he could hardly speak for passion. My father said, that Girolamo was first proposed to the lady, and I was invading his rights every way.

“ I said, the lady was, by her aunt, left free to make her choice; that she had not yet made known, whether either of us was the man: I only waited for that; and I left

it

it to her to decide my fate : I would submit to her decision, but not to any other ; and so saying, I left the room. After this, my uncle was desired to use his influence with me, to give up my pretensions. He advised me to travel, as he had done in his youth ; and promised to give me a large sum of money, and farther expectations at his decease. I still referred to the lady. I wrote to her, and gave my uncle a copy of my letter. I have also a copy about me ; and I will read it to you, Seignior Inglese—

“ MADAME,

“ My brother has made a great disturbance in my family. My father and uncle have espoused his cause. I am urged, persuaded, and threatened, in order to induce me to give up my pretensions to you. I should not deserve your favour, if I could not resist such measures. If you will speak the word, I will persevere till death. If

you forbid me to hope for the blessing, I will obey your commands. Must I be sent to travel? or must I enter into holy orders? or must I die at your feet?—Speak, and decide my fate!

“ANTONIO DI SORANZO.”

“A few days afterwards, I received the following billet—

“THE fate of Don Antonio cannot yet be decided: it is for his safety that it should remain in suspense. He must not visit so often at Donna Hortensia's; he must not leave Naples for longer than a month; he must not shave his crown; he must neither presume nor despair, but wait patiently an event that depends on the will of Heaven.”

“This event is the death of Donna Hortensia, which is expected every day; and I presume to hope, that then Isabella will be mine. If she was now to declare

in my favour, I should be exposed to all the effects of my brother's resentment: it is thus that I understand the letter. I have formed a design, that, if she agrees to, will put it out of the power of our enemies to prevent or interrupt our union. And, now, Seignior Inglese, I shall ask your assistance. I propose, as soon as I can prevail on Isabella to bless me with her hand, to come on board your ship, and take a voyage with you to England. Time will abate the resentment of our friends. Perhaps they will invite us to return home. We shall visit your England, and perhaps France, and the Low Countries. We may settle where we please, and be happy in each other's company. You shall be our friend and assistant; and we will endeavour to make amends for the trouble we give you. And now, Sir, may I depend upon you?"

"I answered, that he might," said Cap-

tain Maurice; "and that I would wait the issue of this affair, and be his faithful servant.

"About a fortnight afterwards, I met Don Antonio again.

"All is well," said he: "I am now upon firm ground. I no longer visit at Donna Hortensia's; but I see Isabella privately at a neighbour's, who is in treaty with her for the house she now lives in. He is our friend and confident, and will favour our escape, when the time is ripe for it. Isabella has given me her promise, and will be mine. I wait her pleasure, and am resigned to her disposal. I have told my uncle, that I mean shortly to set out upon my travels. My father and brother believe that I have given up my pretensions to Isabella. My uncle will advance me a considerable sum, whenever I call for it. All things are prepared;
and

and I now, indeed, wait on the will of Heaven."

"I prepared for the reception of Don Antonio and Isabella on board my ship, and resolved to devote myself to their service.

"I met Don Antonio every week; and we engaged in a friendship that was to last during our lives, and seemed inviolable on both sides.

"One night, I received a note, to this effect—

"DONNA Hortensia is dead! As soon the last duties are paid, Isabella will be mine. She will go with me to any part of the world that I shall chuse: my resolution holds for a voyage to England; and I depend upon your honour and fidelity."

"A. S."

"After this, I saw Don Antonio frequently. He told me he was making

preparations for his departure; that he had acquainted his uncle with his resolution to travel, and was to receive a sum of money from him within a fortnight; that Isabella was turning all her effects into money, for this purpose. She had sold her house to Don Dominico di Rossi, her neighbour and friend, who was commissioned to sell her other estates after her departure, and remit the money to England, for she was resolved not to settle in Naples.

“ I advised them to take only sufficient money for present expences; and to remit the rest through the hands of the English Consul, to be paid to them in London.

“ All things being prepared, I received a summons from Don Antonio—

“ FOLLOW the bearer, who will conduct you to your friend, who waits for your presence to witness his happiness.

“ A. S.”

“ I was

" I was conducted to the house of Don Dominico di Roffi ; where Don Antonio welcomed me, and introduced me to Isabella, and to the master and mistress of the house.

" A priest came soon after, and the nuptials were solemnized. Present, Don Dominico, and his lady ; their eldest son, and daughter ; myself, and an old servant of Donna Hortensia's, who dearly loved Isabella, and upon whom she had settled a pension for life.

" After the ceremony, we had an elegant supper, and spent the evening very pleasantly.

" Donna Isabella informed us, that she had seen Don Girolamo yesterday, for the last time—that she had told him often, that she never would be his, but she had then forbid him to see her any more—that he left her in anger; but declared he would not give her up, and uttered menaces against the man she should favour—that

she was resolved to put it out of his power to injure her or her husband, and that in kindness to all the parties concerned—and she was now ready to follow Don Antonio to any part of the world.

“ I told her, I would do my best to accommodate her on board my ship; and that she might send her baggage as soon as she pleased, and I would see it safely stowed. Don Antonio said, they should send it on the morrow: that he and Isabella should be concealed at Don Dominico's; and, in the evening, he should see me on board the ship.

“ Three days after, Don Antonio and his lady came on board; and, on the fourth, we set sail for England.”

Here Captain Maurice stopped; saying —“ I believe, Madam, I have tired you with my story, though this is only the beginning of it. I will proceed with it another time.”

“No,

“No, Sir,” said I; “*I* am not tired; but *you* may, with talking and walking. Sit down a while, and rest; and proceed at your own time.”

“With your leave, that shall be now; for I wish it was done: it causes me many painful recollections. I am used to walk the deck of a ship; and I am more at my ease than if I sat down—

“Donna Isabella, at the request of her husband, put on boy’s cloaths before she entered the ship. The sailors were told they were brothers, and she went by the name of Don Giulio.

“We had a brisk gale or two, but a good and quick passage upon the whole.

“We landed at Bristol, and my business detained me there some weeks. My passengers were impatient to see the capital, of which they had heard so much. I sent our baggage round by a smaller ship; and ordered the master to send it ashore at

Gravesend, to the house of an acquaintance of mine there.

“ As soon as I had finished my business, I attended them to London, by land, in the stage-coach. They were amazed at the accommodations upon the road; and said, England was, indeed, a fine country to travel in, but very expensive.

“ I carried them to South Lambeth, where I used to lodge, and which was cheaper than London to live in. From thence I used to take a boat to Paul’s Wharf; and I shewed them, by degrees, the extent of the great city, which afforded many subjects of surprize and admiration.

“ Don Antonio and his lady observed, that the people they met were always in a hurry; very different from what they were used to see in Naples—which was natural for them to take notice of; for the Italians walk in a very slow and stately manner, and as if they were telling their steps.

“ I shewed

“ I shewed them every thing worthy of notice in London and the environs. They were pleased with the country about, which looked like a fine garden, highly cultivated; but, they both said, they should not like to live in London.

“ I had my ship laid up; and resolved to devote this year to the company of my friends, and to the enjoyment of my ease in my native country.

It was the beginning of June, the season fine, the days long: I proposed to my friends to make an excursion into the country; to which they agreed.

“ We went on a tour through Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk. They found England greatly superior to the descriptions they had heard of it. I told them, they must expect to see it in a different state in the winter, and prepare to encounter the inclemencies of it.

“ In our journey, we stopped in a pleasant village, and laid by in the heat of the day. After dinner, the landlord laid upon the table a printed catalogue of a sale in the village. It consisted of an estate, with a good house upon it; and the conveniences were specified. Secondly, a farm; with a house, and it's appurtenances. Thirdly, all the household goods and furniture, farming stock, and implements of husbandry, belonging to the mansion-house. Fourthly, the goods and stock of the farm.

“ We enquired of the landlord, how far off were the premises? He told us, they were only a short mile from the street, as he called it.

“ We said, we should like to see them; and he offered to accompany us thither.

“ Don Antonio and Isabella went in the post-chaise. I walked with the landlord, and met them at the mansion-house.

“ We

“ We were told, that these estates had belonged to a gentleman of a respectable family, whose ancestors had resided there, and were a blessing to the village. The last heir left the country, and went to London to see the world. He both saw and felt it to his cost: he entered into all the pleasures and dissipations of it; and, in a few years, run through his fortune. He was obliged to surrender all his effects into the hands of his creditors; and they had commissioned their agents to sell them immediately.

“ My Italian friends were shocked at these circumstances.

“ I said, I was sorry to tell them, that such things were become very common in England. “ Then,” said Don Antonio, “ your virtues and manners are on the decline.”

“ I could not deny it; but I wished him to think the best of us.

“ We

"We went over the house. They liked it extremely.

"I should like," said Don Antonio, "to jump into such an house, ready furnished, and with every convenience about me. What says my Isabella?"

"I," said she, "should think it a paradise."

"If you are in earnest," said I, "this may easily be done. We may attend the sale; and it is probable that it may be sold cheap."

"I asked the landlord, if there were many bidders expected? He answered, no; that it was expected to be sold very cheap.

"Don Antonio desired that I would stand forward as the buyer, and give a fair price for it.

"From the mansion-house, we went to the farm, which was another mile. I talked with the farmer, concerning the rent, and the value of the land; and, having

having gained the lights I wanted, we returned to the inn.

"We talked this matter over. Don Antonio thought the land about the mansion-house would be sufficient for him, and that he should not desire to buy the farm.

"Then," said I, "I will buy that for myself."

"Do so," said Isabella. "You shall marry, and give me a good neighbour there."

"I shook my head, and said, that was not in my power.

"Why not?" said she.

"Because the woman I should have married is dead."

"But, there are others living, that may be as good, and make you as happy."

"Perhaps so, my dear lady; but I may not be worthy of them."

"We must leave this event to time," said Don Antonio; "for Don Francisco will
not

not chuse Isabella for his confessor, I perceive."

"I turned the subject to that of our intended purchases.

"Don Antonio said—"A thought strikes me—Supposing my monies in England should not be sufficient to answer the purchase I meditate?"

"What then?" said I. "Have you not a friend who will be proud to supply you?"

"He grasped my hand: said, I was indeed a friend; such an one, that he should be unable to do any thing without me. Isabella joined in the acknowledgment; and, I believe, there were not, at that moment, three persons in the world that had a more entire friendship and confidence in each other. Oh, happy days, that never shall return!—Days of misery only remain for me!"

Here

Here Captain Maurice groaned, and was silent some minutes.

I desired him to take breath a while. I offered him some refreshment. He drank a glass of wine, sat down, crossed his arms, and looked overwhelmed with melancholy thoughts. At length, he resumed his story—

“ We attended the sale. I bought both the estates ; which was all of the first day’s business.

“ I offered the agents to purchase all the stock and furniture of both houses together. They said, notice had been publicly given, and the sale was expected. I then said—“ Suppose you put all of them into two great lots ; one for the mansion-house, the other for the farm ; and let any one that pleases bid against me.” After some discussion, this was agreed to.

“ The auctioneer made a general valuation ;

tion ; and I bought them the following day. There was only one bidder against me. But then the lots were put up at the full value : they were certainly worth more to us than to any other persons.

“ I told Antonio, that I would put him into possession of his purchase, and then go with the agents to London, and pay the first part of the money, and give security for the remainder. He said, he would consent, upon condition that I should stay no longer than was necessary : “ for we shall do nothing, nor enjoy any thing, till you return.”

“ As soon as the business was finished, we left the inn, and took possession of the mansion-house.

“ It was pleasantly situated, near a navigable river ; and there was a creek that came up within a quarter of a mile of the house. There was a boat there, and every convenience for fishing and for pleasure,
in

in a hut that was built hard by for that purpose.

“ Don Antonio and Isabella were overjoyed to find themselves in a house of their own. We entertained the agents of the creditors, gave them a dinner, and then dismissed them to our quarters at the inn.

“ We were next to engage servants for the family. The dairy-maid was lately married to a young, sturdy husbandman. I advised my friends to engage them both, for we found them in the house. I desired the farmer's wife to send us a neat girl, to wait upon the lady of the mansion. I had a handy boy, who used to wait upon Isabella on board ship: she called him her page; and I promised that she should have him, as soon as I could fetch him from Lambeth, where I left him. I took a farmer's boy, to run on errands, and wait at table, for the present moment. Thus having formed a kind of household, I
settled

settled them in three days time; and they began to find themselves at home.

“ I then took leave of my friends, and went to the inn, to the agents; and, the next morning, set out with them for London.

“ Don Antonio had given me an order upon his banker, to receive all the monies in his hands. I made the first payment for him and myself, and gave security for the remainder.

“ I sold my monies out of the public funds, and put every thing in train for concluding our purchases. I discharged our lodgings at Lambeth, paid off the servants, and the dues of all kinds. It was above a month before I was free to return to D——.

“ I received a packet of letters from Italy for Don Antonio; and a remittance from Don Dominico di Rossi, which enabled

abled me to finish the purchases; and I settled all these affairs before I left London.

“ I likewise paid a visit to a dear little infant at nurse at Stockwell. This child is now under your care, Madam; and I am happy that she is so well placed, for all her obligations are mine.”

“ Pray, Sir, allow me to ask, whether she is not nearly related to you ?”

“ She is, Madam: I have chosen you for my confessor, and will not now shrink back.

“ Her mother's name was Charlotte Brady. I dearly loved her, and wished to marry her; but my uncle would never have consented to it. He was an old bachelor; and an enemy to marriage, particularly in soldiers and sailors: he said, they ought not to think of it, till they were wholly retired from their profession. I was dependent upon my uncle, and had only my wages as mate of his ship, and
was

was unable to support a family; but I was under a solemn promise to marry her, as soon as my uncle should die.

“Our amour had the usual consequences. She found herself with child, and pressed me to marry her; which I could not comply with, for the reasons I have given: but I made vows of fidelity, and left the greatest part of my property in her hands.

“I went my voyage. At my return, I found her with my infant at her breast, and in a deep decline.

“Our meeting was very tender. I blamed her mother for suffering her to nurse the child, in her weak situation. I sent for an eminent physician. He ordered the child to be taken from her; and that she should go into the country for the air, and drink cow's milk diluted, which he judged to be better than asses milk.

“I carried her to Enfield, and took lodgings

lodgings there. We put the child to nurse, to a hearty, strong woman; and Charlotte saw it every day.

“ I offered to marry her then, but she declined it, from generous motives. She said, if it had been offered in time, to make her child legitimate, she would not have refused it; but, as that time was past, she would wait till it was quite convenient to me.

“ Her mother was a tradesman's widow, a modest, humble woman. She had three more children, and a scanty fortune to maintain them.

“ I put out her eldest son to a brazier, and the second to the sea. There was another daughter, who assisted her mother in nursing and attending on my Charlotte.

“ I staid with them at Enfield several weeks, and till my uncle wrote to me to come to him at Gravesend, and prepare for another voyage.

“ I then

“ I then offered to put off the voyage, and to stay with Charlotte till she should be perfectly recovered; but she opposed it. She said, I had more expences coming upon me, for herself and the child, and I ought not to lose the means of increasing my property. Beside that, my staying at home might offend my uncle, and injure my interest.

“ I took a melancholy farewell of my dear girl, with a foreboding heart that I should never see her alive again. I left all the money I had with her; charging her to take care of her health, as the best proof she could give of her regard for me.

“ I went with my uncle, as usual, to Naples, and to Messina. I was absent seven months; and, at my return, found my Charlotte in the cold grave.

“ I was deeply affected, though not surprized. Her mother and I comforted each other.

other. I put a stone over her grave, and shed many tears upon it.

“ A young carpenter courted the other daughter. They married, and removed to Stockwell : the mother, and the young child, went with them. I paid them well for her board ; and she continued with them till I thought it was time to take some care of her education, when I took her away from them, to place her with you.

“ And, now, Madam, I must beg you to judge me favourably in this affair ; for I could not have acted otherwise than I did.”

“ I have no right to sit in judgment upon your conduct, Sir : I leave it to your own conscience to decide upon it. But now, I think, it will be right to take some respite. You must be fatigued ; and we will postpone the remainder to another day.”

“I will do so, Madam, at your desire: I will take my leave of you for this evening.”

So saying, he bowed, and departed.

And here I will give my friend a respite also for the present; but I will soon resume the pen, and the story.

Adieu! and love me, as I shall endeavour to deserve it.

FRANCES DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Will now proceed with Captain Maurice's story.

He came again two days afterwards, at the hour when I dismissed my school. As soon as the forms were set by, he renewed his walk, and his story.

"You cannot conceive, Madam, the joy with which I was received at my return to D——. Don Antonio flew into my arms, and held me in his for some minutes. He called me his friend, his brother, and the blessing of his life. He made Isabella embrace me, and shewed every mark of unfeigned affection.

"I told him all that I had done for his service, and gave him the packet from D. Dominico di Rossi.

“ It contained letters from himself to Don Antonio, and from his lady to Isabella. And also one from Don Antonio’s uncle, in reply to one he left to be sent to him after he was gone; excusing his elopement with Isabella, by desiring him to suppose himself in his situation, and then asking, whether he could refuse the blessings of love and fortune, to gratify an elder brother, who neither loved nor cared for him?

“ The uncle, in his reply, confessed that, in his heart, he excused him; but that he dared not avow it to his father or brother. That Don Girolamo was like a madman for many days: and, though his rage had subsided, his resentment remained. And that he was of opinion, that it would not be safe for him to return to Naples.

“ Don Antonio said, he had no such intention; and that he was as happy here as he could be in any part of the world.

“ There

“ There is only one thing wanting to make my happiness perfect.”

“ I asked what that was, and whether I could not procure it for him? He said, it was a priest of his own religion to visit him, and to perform the duties of the Romish Church for them.

“ This I undertook to do in a short time.

“ I went to the family of a Catholic baronet, and obtained that his chaplain should attend them at the great festivals, and some of the holidays of the year. This completed their wishes, and there never was a happier family. It was a delightful autumn. I carried Don Antonio with me a shooting. Sometimes we went a fishing in the boat.

“ One very fine day, we persuaded Isabella to go with us. The wind was high, and we had some difficulty in landing. Isabella fell into the water. I jumped in after her, and brought her safely to land.

She was a good deal frightened, and very wet, but not otherwise hurt.

“I left the boy to bring the boat ashore; and Don Antonio and I gave our whole attention to Isabella. We carried her home between us. She got dry clothes and linen, and met us at dinner.

“She then paid her acknowledgments to me; but said, she would have nothing to do with water-parties from this time forward.

“It seemed as if every circumstance that occurred served to endear us to each other, and to cement our mutual friendship.

“I took possession of my farm. I planned an addition to the house; a new lower room, and a chamber over it. Isabella desired I would make it large enough to receive a wife; and Antonio added his urgency, that I should give them, one day, a neighbour.

“Don

“ Don Antonio was subject to the cholic constitutionally. I went to a sea-port town, at about twelve miles distance, in the boat; and took with me only the boy I have mentioned.

“ I went to a sale at the Custom-house. I purchased a tub of Hollands geneva, a lot of brandy, and some other articles. I stowed them in the boat, and carried them safely home. At my return, Don Antonio was ill with the cholic. I told him I had brought a cure for it; and that, as the weather grew cold, he must take some of it frequently, to fortify him against the approach of winter.

“ I mixed it with boiling water, and put some grated ginger in it. He took it, and found relief presently.

“ He said, that I foresaw all his wants, and knew how to provide against them. I bade him keep this liquor always in the house, and not fear to use it freely.

“As winter came on, my friends retreated from room to room; and, at last, settled in the keeping parlour, which was a very warm and comfortable room: and I advised Isabella to have a constant fire in her bed-chamber. With all these precautions, they found the winter less severe than they expected.

“I talked with the hind, and found him able to conduct the farming business. His wife performed the dairy work, and had a peasant girl under her. The household was now established, and regularly conducted.

“During the winter season, I taught my friends to understand the English language, and I read and conversed with them.

“In this happy society, the winter wore away imperceptibly: I never knew it so short.

“We welcomed the approach of Spring. I sought for the earliest flowers, to grace the fair Isabella's bosom; the snow-drop,
the

the yellow crocus, and the purple, intermixed with laurustinus. I wove a garland, and placed it upon her head. Antonio was not displeased at my gallantry, but complimented my taste.

“ I told them, I must shortly take a journey to London, and to Bristol; and desired them to think of what I could do for their service. They seemed loth to part with me, and bade me hasten my return.

“ I was absent between two and three months, on business of various kinds. I brought down with me a master-builder, who undertook my proposed alterations in my farm-house. It was an aukward, irregular building, that looked well enough in front, having two rooms and a passage; but, behind, it was quite in and out, and one quarter vacant; so that it made a kind of triangle. My builder proposed to fill up this quarter, and make it a square house,

house, and to carry the offices down to one side, into the yard.

“ I was to have one very good parlour, and a store-room ; and, above, a very good bed-chamber and dressing-room, with a separate stair-case. The roof was to be raised, and two good garrets in front ; two, not so good, for the use of the farmer.

“ The lease expired at Michaelmas. Several tenants offered, and proposed voluntarily to raise the rent. I let it to a responsible man, for one hundred pounds a year, which was ten pounds advanced rent ; and conditioned for my own reserved apartment.

“ I had every place put into thorough repair, and made a good road from the mansion-house.

“ My friends complained, that this undertaking engrossed my time and attention, and that they had less of my company. I observed, that Donna Isabella was increased
in

in size; and congratulated her husband on the prospect of an heir, who should be an Englishman.

“ He received my compliment coldly, and turned the conversation. I thought he seemed to think it too great a liberty : I could not otherwise account for his behaviour.

“ I thought I saw, at times, a cast of care upon his brow; but he was generally as open as ever. Isabella was unwell, and often retired to her apartment.

“ One day, he spoke upon the subject himself. He wished Isabella had some female friend, to advise her in the choice of a nurse, and a midwife. I said, he should consult the doctor in the next town; and he would recommend a nurse, and provide all other conveniencies.

“ He desired me to explain my meaning. I could hardly make him understand,

or believe, that men attended our ladies in the office of accoucheur.

“ He raved against the impropriety and indecency of this custom : said, that the Italian ladies would never permit such things ; and that his Isabella should never submit to them. I told him, that I was not able to decide upon the subject : “ but, let it be good or evil, it is unjust that your resentment should fall upon me, who only answered your questions.”

“ He seemed to recollect himself, and apologized for his warmth ; but I thought his behaviour capricious and absurd.

“ The wife of the hind lay in in the house. She was attended by an old woman, the midwife of the parish.

“ Don Antonio took occasion to remark upon the subject, and to tax me with falsehood. He asked the hind, whether men ever attended in such cases ? The man answered, that the gentry always bespoke

spoke the doctor ; and only poor men, like himself, employed the old woman.

“ This made him more easy. He ordered the woman to attend Isabella, and to give her advice and assistance ; and she confirmed the truth of my report.

“ He seemed uneasy and unsatisfied in his mind ; and said, that it was a kind of sacrilege for any man to approach Isabella in her present situation. He did not like that I should see or converse with her. He said, it was owing to his care and anxiety about her ; and always seemed conscious, that his behaviour stood in need of an apology.

“ Upon this occasion, it came into my mind, that the dearest and most intimate friends might see too much of each other, and that it would be prudent in me to seek another home ; that I would go an excursion, and come over now and then, till my house was finished ; that I would
reside

reside there some months in the summer, and go to London, or to Bristol, in the winter.

“ I took leave of Antonio, who said, he was sorry to lose my company ; but his looks said something very different. I had done nothing to forfeit his regard ; and I knew not whether I was more angry, or grieved, at his behaviour.

“ I desired him to address his letters to be left at the post-house at N—— ; and, if he had occasion for my services, he might command my return at a short notice.

“ He embraced me, and desired me to excuse any thing that I thought amiss in his temper, or conduct ; assuring me, that his affection for me was as strong as ever.

“ I wished I had not so soon given credit to professions and fair appearances. I repented that I had purchased the farm, and laid out more upon it, and thus fixed my residence near the mansion.

“ I went

“ I went a tour through Cambridge-shire, Lincolnshire, and Derbyshire; and back again, through Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, and Norfolk. I should have been happily amused; but I had a thorn in my heart, that would not let me enjoy my own comforts.

“ When I came to N——, I found two letters from Don Antonio. In the first he acquainted me, that his dear Isabella had brought him a son, and demanded my congratulations. In the second, he wished for my return; and to consult me on the subject of his farm, as he thought his manager put him to too much expence.

“ There was also a letter from my architect, who wished me to see the state of my house, and to give orders for the fitting it up on the inside. I resolved to go thither directly.

“ I wrote to my correspondent in London to send me down goods to furnish my
apartment,

apartment, neat, and plain, and fitting for a farm-house. I determined to go into it as soon as it should be finished; and, in the mean time, I should find employment in it.

“ I returned to D——, and went directly to the mansion-house. My heart did not beat with joy, as it used to do, when I approached it: but I determined to see how the land lay; and, if I did not like my reception, to take up my lodging at the inn in the village.

“ Don Antonio received me as a welcome guest. I thanked him for his letters, and congratulated him on the birth of his son. He seemed more at ease within himself, and more free in his behaviour to me. Isabella brought her child to shew me: her behaviour was free and kind. Antonio's eyes were fixed on her and me; he never withdrew them a moment; his countenance varied often, yet he seemed to conceal the emotions of his mind. I said to myself—

myself—"Is not this man jealous? If so, it accounts at once for his late conduct. I know myself innocent of having given cause for it: but that is not sufficient to satisfy a mind tinged with this fatal passion; I will observe him carefully, and come to an explanation with him."

"He behaved in a kind and friendly manner for several days, and in that time he consulted me concerning the management of his farm.

"I told him, that his servant was right; that he ought to be generous to his farm, and that it would repay him seven-fold—That, as he kept a head-man and a boy in the house, that was sufficient; and it was better to hire men occasionally, than to increase the number of servants to be constantly maintained.

"He was convinced by my arguments, and thanked me for my counsel.

"I advised

“ I advised him to make acquaintance with some of the neighbouring gentry, but he declined it.

“ He complained of lassitude and inquietude; and said, he never experienced such feelings in Italy. I told him, it was owing to want of society, and want of employment. I recommended the study of agriculture; saying, the greatest philosophers had thought it worthy of their attention. I got books of this kind for him, and he promised to peruse them. I advised him to make an excursion with me; but he excused himself, saying, he could not leave Isabella alone. I said, she would be employed in her nursery duties and employments.

“ And who is to be her protector in my absence?”

“ She will not want any, for she will not be in danger of any kind.”

“ I will

“ I will not trust to that,” said he: “ I will not leave her.”

“ As you please, Sir: but I cannot conceive what you are afraid of.”

“ Within a week, his countenance was altered again, and seemed full of anxiety and suspicion. When he was in full confidence with me, he used to call me, *Don Francisco*; or, *Mio caro Amico*! when in this way, it was *Capitano Maurici*; and this, by degrees, became the general appellation.

“ One evening, as we were sitting after supper, and Isabella was present, he asked me, whether I never intended to go to sea again?

“ I paused some time before I answered; and then said—“ I do not know; but I know for whose sake I have staid at home.”

“ He looked earnestly at me, as if expecting a farther answer.

“ I then said—“ I thought, Sir, that you had occasion for my services, and that I

was

was obliging you by giving you my company; at least, you gave me reason to believe so."

"He coloured, hesitated, and was so confused, that he could not speak plainly. At last, he said he was very much obliged to me, but he should be sorry that I should lose the great advantages I made by my voyages to Naples and Messina, on his account.

"I answered—"You have made Naples too warm a country for me. But I should be glad to know what you drive at; and I beg you would explain your meaning farther."

"He said, he had no meaning but what was for my advantage.

"You, then, prefer my advantage to your own satisfaction, at this time?"

"Yes, Seignior Capitano; I would not that you should lose your time."

"How

“How comes it that you did not think so a year ago?”

“Seignior, I thought—I believed—I wished that you would not leave us, until—till—till—”

“Till you had no farther need of me. You, then, preferred your pleasure to my advantage?”

“I smiled indignantly, and he seemed to shrink into nothing. He took shame to himself, and was silent.

“Isabella looked at us both. She said—
“Don Antonio!—Don Francisco!—what is the matter? I fear you do not understand each other.”

“I am afraid I understand too much. I leave you, Don Antonio! I wish you a good night!”

“So saying, I took my hat, and went out of the room, as if I was going up to bed. I bowed to Isabella as I retired. As soon as I had walked a turn in the garden,

garden, I resolved to go directly to the inn. I did so. I spent a very restless and uneasy night. I was irresolute how to act in this disagreeable situation; whether to reconcile myself to Don Antonio, or to break with him for ever. I felt, by turns, resentment, pity, and forgiveness. I pitied his jealousy, I resented his ingratitude, and I despised his meanness.

“ Thus I spent the night and the day at the inn. In the evening, I received the following note from Isabella—

“ DON ANTONIO is very much concerned at what passed between him and Don Francisco last night: the thoughts of it deprived him of rest. All this day he has been very ill with the cholic, and grows worse every hour.

“ Forgive, and forget, the infirmities of a friend, and hasten to our assistance. Be our comforter and physician, as you used
to

to be; and our only friend, as we are yours, truly,

“ANTONIO AND ISABELLA DI SORANZO.”

“ I doubted whether to obey this summons; but friendship got the better of my resentment, and I resolved to try him once more, and that for the last time.

“ I went to the mansion-house. Isabella was told I was come. She came down stairs to meet me.

“ You are very kind,” she said: “ I thought you would not desert us; I was sure you would come. Let us go up stairs, for he wishes and longs to see you.”

“ I followed her into Antonio’s chamber: he was rolling about upon the bed, in agony.

“ He lifted up his head, and saw me. He held out his hand, and hid his face in the pillow, as if ashamed to see me. I took his hand, and he grasped mine strongly.

“ I said—

“ I said—“ Let us make haste, and get the medicine ready. I asked for the materials: the servant brought them; and I gave him a strong dose of geneva and boiling water, with ginger grated into it. He seemed to shake with cold. I suspected that it was something of the gout in his stomach, as I had done before; and I had advised him to drink more wine, for that it was necessary in a country so much colder than his own: but he seemed to grudge the expence, and I found him afraid of that in every thing. I was obliged to give him a second dose, and a third. At length it gave way, and the pain abated by degrees.

“ I advised him to get some repose, and offered to leave him, but he begged me to stay: so I threw myself into a great chair; and we both took a comfortable sleep, to our great refreshment.

“ Isabella left the room; and I fancied
—him I ”

he

he did not like to leave us together. When once a suspicion is gone forth, every trifling circumstance seems to add strength to it.

“ I desired Isabella to order some mutton-broth to be made, and that Antonio should eat nothing else. When he awoke, I enquired after his complaint; and he was quite easy. I then took leave of him, in order to return to the inn. Both he and Isabella pressed me to stay; but I said—
“ When you are well enough, we must have a serious conversation: there are some points to be settled between us, before I can again lodge under your roof. God bless you—and farewell!”

“ The next morning, I sent to know how Don Antonio did. The answer was, that he was much better, and desired to see me.

“ I went to the house, and into his apartment. As soon as we were alone,

I went to the bottom of the subject, and desired him to give me the reasons of the alteration in his behaviour towards me. He was, at first, shy and reserved; but I insisted on a full explanation.

“ He confessed, that he had felt much inquietude; but could not well explain the reasons of it. When I was absent, he reflected upon my merit, and the services I had done him; and then he loved me as well, or better than ever: but, when I was present, his inquietude returned, and he was almost ready to wish me away again, though he condemned himself for it.

“ I desired him to tell me, if any part of my conduct had given cause for this inquietude; if I had given him any offence? I begged him to be very explicit, for it would oblige me very much; and, perhaps, it would lay the foundation of a right understanding hereafter.

“ Again

“ Again he shuffled and hesitated.

“ Speak out, Sir,” said I: “ either speak like a man, or give me manly satisfaction.”

“ He turned pale ; and, in a strange manner, half willing, and half afraid, he told me, that his servants paid me more respect than they did him, and looked up to me for orders and directions ; and—and—and—he thought I meant to live here, and be their master.

“ I felt anger and contempt rise in my heart ; but the latter kept under the former.

“ How could you think so, when you see me making an apartment for myself in my farm-house, and that I am preparing to reside in it as soon as it is habitable ?—But go on, Sir : tell me all the rest.”

“ He said, some part of his inquietude was on account of Isabella. When I was absent, she was always speaking in my

praise ; that I was so clever, that I knew every thing that was to be done by land, as well as sea ; and that I had resources for every thing—that she once said, she believed, if Don Francisco were cast ashore, naked, in a strange country, he could make his fortune there, by being useful to every body that fell in his way—that he feared she might, in time, love me better than himself—that he sometimes made the comparison against himself, finding me so much more useful in society ; and that he wished he had made himself capable of doing many things I did ; only that, in his country, such things were thought unworthy of a gentleman : but, though he valued me for knowing so many things, he did not like that his wife, or dependants, should love or respect me more than himself.

“ Here he paused, and looked ashamed, and yet glad it was over.

“ Is

“Is this all that you can say or think upon this subject?”

“It is all,” said he; “and you have obliged me to say all that I think, or feel.”

“Well, Sir, I perceive it has been sufficiently painful to you; and yet I am glad that you have been so explicit with me. And now, Sir, hear me in turn, and hear me patiently. It is necessary to probe a wound before it can be healed; and to know your complaint, is a step towards the cure. It depends upon you only, Don Antonio, to heal your wound, and to cure your distemper. It is called jealousy: that is it's right name; and a worse, or more painful one, is hardly to be found. It makes you unjust to me, and unhappy in yourself. I call Heaven to witness, that I have never injured you, in thought, word, or deed; so may I prosper in all my undertakings! Thus far with regard to myself.—But you have also injured your

wife, who deserves your entire love and confidence. You owe her your repentance, and reparation also. You are guilty of cruelty and injustice. But what shall I say of your suspicions of others, because they pay me the respect they owe me, even upon your account? They are mean and sordid, unbecoming a gentleman, unbecoming a man. I am ashamed of them for you. They have lessened you in my esteem; they have driven me from you: for, after what you have confessed, I can no longer take up my residence in your house. In the next place, Don Antonio, I must inform you, that my fortune is sufficient to live comfortably upon, without going to sea, unless I chuse to do so; and that it belongs to me only to decide that point. I mention this circumstance, to convince you that I never meant to fasten myself upon you, nor to live at your expence. My spirit is too high for that situation; but,
while

while I was of service to you, I thought I earned my board with you ; and that is all I ever received from you. I never asked, nor received, any payment for your passage and accommodations during your voyage to England. You professed yourself my friend ; you solicited my company in the strongest manner ; you said, you could do nothing without me. Deceived by your professions, I thought we had established the most sincere and disinterested friendship, which nothing could break or disturb. Such a friendship is it's own desert and recompence. I would have divided my last shilling with you. Nothing but your own mean and injurious suspicions could have broken ours : and they will poison your happiness, whether I am with you or not ; for they will create objects of doubt and distrust, and mix with every thing you do, or think. If I sought revenge upon you, I could not have a

greater one : but I advise you, as the last proof of my regard for you, to drive this evil spirit from your bosom, while you are suffering from the pains and troubles it has caused you. Now is your only time ; for, to be always fluctuating between right and wrong, is a miserable state. Consult your priest upon this subject : it is a serious matter. You have been ingenuous in your confession to me. I thank you, and forgive you for this reason. May God be your protector ! May you be happy and fortunate !—Farewel !”

“ While I was speaking, Don Antonio’s countenance varied continually. Repentment, shame, and grief, were predominant in their turns. At the conclusion, the last had the ascendancy. When I was going to leave him, he held me in his arms—he wept—he held my cloaths. At last, he fell on his knees, and embraced mine : he implored

plored my forgiveness in the most humble manner.

“ I am never pleased with improper humiliation. I never knew a person capable of an abject submission, that was not as ready to offend again. A mind that is conscious of it's own integrity, scorns to say more than it means to perform.

“ I felt pity for Don Antonio, but it was mingled with contempt. I raised him from his knees, and begged him to be composed. I told him, I would try the strength of his resolutions in my own way ; and, when I was convinced that his mind was cured of it's unjust suspicions, I would be to him all that I had ever been. In the mean time, I must leave him to his own considerations.

“ We were called down to dinner. Isabella met us with a smile. She took my hand, and that of Antonio, and joined them together. She said—“ May God

confirm the union!" Antonio's eyes were full of tears. I bowed in silence; and we sat down to dinner.

"After the servant was retired, Isabella acknowledged my kindness in coming to Antonio's relief. She said, whenever he was uneasy in his mind, these attacks of the cholic came upon him: but, she hoped, all things were now set right between us; and that she should never forget what she owed to my friendship.

"Don Antonio said but little. He sighed often, and seemed full of vexation and care.

"When the evening came on, I took my leave. They both pressed me to stay; but I had taken my resolution, and adhered to it.

"I told them, I was going to London; and asked, if I could do them any service there? Antonio wished me to enquire, if there were any letters for him from Italy.

I pro-

I promised to do so, and was going away ; but he stopped me—

“ Do not be in so much haste to leave us. Let me ask you a question.”

“ Do so, and I will answer it.”

“ Supposing we should wish to make a visit to Italy, when the dear child is old enough to bear the voyage ; would you not carry us thither in your ship ?”

“ It is not in my power, if it was my inclination. I have sold my ship ; and, if ever I go to sea again, it will be in a different way.”

“ That is unlucky !”

“ Thus far I can serve you : I can enquire for a ship that is going to some port in Italy, and get you a passage in it, if you desire it.”

“ I thank you, Sir : but where shall I direct to you in your absence ?”

“ At Garraway’s Coffee-house, Cornhill. If you should chuse to sell your estate here,

I dare say, it will be easy to find a customer. It was bought very cheap; and, perhaps, may be sold to advantage."

"I have no thoughts of that, at present; but I will consider of it."

"Again I took my leave; and it was with difficulty I got away.

"I was very uneasy in my mind. I was disappointed in that friendship which I had relied upon as the chief comfort of my life. I was unsettled, and undetermined with respect to my future residence, and could only resolve on spending the winter in London.

"My new tenant took possession of the farm at Michaelmas. It was now the latter end of October. The goods I had ordered were arrived, and my new rooms were getting into a state to receive them. I had pleased myself with the thoughts of the employment I should have in getting
my

my house in order by Christmas, when I intended to inhabit it. My schemes were all overſet. I put the goods into the room unpacked, locked the doors of my new apartment, and gave the keys to the farmer. I ſent for all my baggage from the manſion-houſe, packed up my apparel, and ſet off to N——, and from thence to London.

“ I found a letter for Don Antonio at the uſual place. I encloſed it in a cover, and ſent it to him directly.

“ At a coffee-houſe that I frequented, I met with many ſeaſaring people. A gentleman was going to Antwerp, hearing that the Emperor was endeavouring to revive the trade of that port, formerly ſo famous. He invited me to go with him, and I accepted his offer.

“ We failed ſoon after, with a fair wind, and had a good voyage. The captain,
who

who was likewise the chief owner, staid some time at Antwerp; but I visited all the principal towns in Brabant. From thence I went through Flanders, and at last came down to Ostend. I laid plans, in my own mind, for establishing a trade hereafter. Finding a ship ready to sail for Harwich, I returned home in it, having been absent between four and five months.

“ I found, at the coffee-house I frequented, three letters from Don Antonio.

“ The first contained an acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter from Italy. It brought an account of the marriage of Don Girolamo, his eldest brother; and that his resentment against him was as strong as ever—that his uncle was now of the party against him, and had promised to make Girolamo his heir—that there was, therefore, no encouragement for him to return to Naples again.

“ The

“The second gave an account of the sickness and death of his son—that Isabella was inconsolable for his loss; and he was obliged to stifle his own grief, and to be her comforter.

“The third was an enumeration of the wants of the family, and a commission to send them stores of all kinds. He was surprized that he had not heard from me, but supposed I was absent, and hoped to hear from me as soon as I was returned.

“Now, this commission I wished to decline; for he had honoured me in the same way whenever I went to London, but never once offered to repay me the money I had laid out for him; and I began to wish to withdraw from all connection with him.

“I answered his three letters in one, as briefly as possible. I condoled with him
on

on the death of his son; and wished the loss might be repaired. I advised him to send for his family stores to N——, which was but little more than ten miles, rather than from London, which was an hundred, as the best œconomy. I wished him and Isabella health and happiness, and so concluded.

“ My farmer sent me a letter also. He wished me to come to D——. He had some farther improvements to propose to me; and he would have my apartment aired and got ready upon my first notice.

“ I sent word, that I would be with him on the twentieth of May; and I was exact to my time.”

Here Captain Maurice stopped to take breath; and I desired him to postpone the remainder of his story till another day.

He said, he would do so; for, he believed, I was tired, as well as himself; and

and what followed would be very painful for him to relate: but he was resolved to make a full confession of all his sins, relying upon my honour and secrecy, and hoping I would accept it as a pledge of his sincere penitence, and his resolution to make every atonement in his power.

And, now, my dear friend, I will conclude this letter. Make it known to your children, that the friend of their mother is theirs also; that she longs to embrace them, and to tell them so.

Donna Isabella di Soranzo salutes you. She promises you her friendship. She invites you to visit her, as soon as you are fully informed of her past sufferings, and her present situation. She will soon lay claim to your tenderest pity and affectionate regards.

My adopted children present their respectful compliments to Mrs. Strickland,
and

and her young people. They hope to be, in due time, their friends, playfellows, and humble servants. I am

Yours truly and affectionately,

FRANCES DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

HUMAN Nature is undefineable. Man vainly strives to investigate it. Some believe it naturally prone to evil: others, that it is equally susceptible of good and bad impressions; and this is the most reconcileable to reason, and to experience. Man is born liable to sin, but not incapable of virtue: yet he must be continually on his guard against the dangers that surround him; or present pleasure, or present passions, will weigh down the hope of future recompence. Even men of good principles, and moral conduct, are liable to fall, by insensible steps, into crimes that, at first, they shudder at.

I fell into these reflections while I was preparing to continue the history of Captain

tain Maurice for your perusal: a man of a mixed character, such as compose the bulk of mankind; for very few are absolutely good, or atrociously wicked.

Captain Maurice, at his next visit, continued his story as follows—

“ I came to my farm on the twentieth of May, as I had promised. I brought with me some books on the improvements in agriculture, which I recommended to my tenant's perusal. I talked with him upon his proposed alterations, and we were mutually satisfied with each other.

“ The day after my arrival, I sent a message of enquiry after the health of Antonio and Isabella. They sent an answer, desiring to see me as soon as possible.

“ In the evening, John Roberts, whom I had placed with them, came with a second message, desiring my company to dinner on the morrow. After he had delivered

livered his message, he desired me to hear what he had farther to say, on his own account.

“ He told me, that Don Antonio was a very odd-tempered man—that he was pleased and displeased without any reason—that he had long been tired of living with him, and that he had given him warning, six weeks ago, to leave him at the month’s end; but his master either could not, or would not, understand him, nor would he let him go—that, hearing I was expected, he staid till I should come to D——, hoping that I should make his master hear reason, and that they should part upon good terms.

“ I promised to settle matters with his master. He asked me, whether I intended to go to sea again? If I did, he hoped I would take him with me. I said, it was uncertain; but, if I did not myself, I would recommend him to another ship-master.

He

He was full of complaints of his master's jealous and suspicious temper; but I cut him short, and sent him home.

“The next day, I went to dinner at the mansion-house. Don Antonio received me with formal civility, but not with the warmth of friendship. Isabella was more frank and open in her behaviour. She was full of grief for the loss of her son, and told me every circumstance of his sickness and death.

“I said all that I could think of, by way of consolation, both to her and her husband,

“After dinner, we conversed on various subjects. I took occasion to mention John's complaints; particularly that, after having given him the usual warning, he refused to let him go. I said, perhaps he was not fully informed of our laws and customs: that servants here were as free as their masters; and, in case of dislike on
either

either side, they were equally free to separate, either giving the other the usual warning, or a month's wages. He was angry. He said, the lower sort of people had too much liberty in England; it only made them saucy and ungovernable. I would not enter into the subject with him: I only told him, such were our laws and customs, and they must be complied with.

“ He supposed, I would take him again into my service. I said, that was uncertain; and, after he had fairly left him, it was of no consequence to whom he should offer himself. He seemed displeased with me, as well as with John. I turned the subject.

“ Isabella told me she had received several civil messages from the rector's wife, on account of the child's sickness and death. I wished she had encouraged her acquaintance; and she might, then, have acquired a neighbour, and, perhaps, a friend.

“ Antonio said, he could not bear the
idea

idea of a married priest. I answered, that married priests were much less dangerous, among men's wives and daughters, than such as took a vow of chastity, which they never wished nor intended to keep.

“He was offended; but seemed to check himself, as if afraid of affronting me. Again I changed the subject; but we could not agree in opinion on hardly any point: and I no longer paid attention to his humours, as formerly, but spoke with an honest and manly freedom; yet not rudely, nor merely to gratify my own temper.

“I invited Antonio and Isabella to dine with me, in my new apartment, and wished them to name a day. Antonio seemed to demur, and doubt whether to accept my invitation. I smiled; and, I fear, it was rather contemptuously: for I said—“As I know your engagements and occupations are very numerous, I leave you to consider and resolve upon this important subject.”

I turned

I turned to Isabella, and said—"When Don Antonio has determined on the day, be so good to let me know as soon as possible, that I may get something for you to eat." She answered, that she hoped I would not take too much trouble upon myself on that account.

"Antonio looked fullen and reserved. I asked him to lend me the boat, and I would endeavour to get some fish for him. He said, it was always at my service. I took my leave.

"The next morning, I sent to desire Don Antonio would let John go with me a-fishing. I was answered, that he was wanted at home, and could not be spared. Jack slipped a note into the boy's hand, and in it were these words—

"It is all nothing but ill-humour and crossness; for master could spare me if he would. Sir, your friend and servant,

"J. R."

“No matter,” said I: “he shall not provoke me to do any thing to blame myself for hereafter. I will bear with him for a while; and he shall not drive me away from my own house.”

“I took my tenant’s boy with me. I caught a good many fish. I sent half of them to the mansion-house, and had the rest dressed at home.

“Mrs. Ringrose, my tenant’s wife, was a clever and managing woman. They had five children; three daughters, and two sons.

“The eldest daughter was about eighteen years old; a neat and well-looking girl, healthy, and chearful. I meditated whether she would not be a suitable wife for me, but was not resolved on making the offer. I only mention it to you, as a proof that I never had a thought of seducing Antonio’s wife: but one inducement

ment to marriage was, the hope it might cure him of his jealousy.

“ One day, the following week, they dined with me; and I desired Mrs. Ringrose to do the honours of my table. Antonio was displeased at it; and, after she was retired, he mentioned it as an affront to Isabella. I explained to him the difference between an English farmer and an Italian one, who is only the vassal of his lord, and does not presume to eat of the wheat which he sows and reaps. I told him, that his husbandman was a better man; “ for he is a freeman, and your Italian vassal is a slave.” He was not pleased with my explanation: but I defended my assertion; and, upon that ground, my setting the farmer’s wife at my table.

“ I visited Antonio about once a week. He seldom came to me. He was reserved and abstracted in his manners, except when he wanted my advice and assistance; and

then he was free enough. We frequently differed in opinion, and I spoke my own sentiments freely, and sometimes ventured to touch him in a tender part; but I did it to cure him of his eternal jealousy and suspicion.

“Once, when he was talking of returning to Italy, I asked him how he should like that Isabella should be attended by a Ciciſbeo? He was much offended at it.

“Nay,” said I, “but you must submit to the custom of your own country. I do not say this, to dissuade you from returning to Italy, for I really think it is the best thing you can do. But, how will your countrymen receive you, if you oppose, or blame, the system of Ciciſbeism?”

“He was very angry, and went out of the room. I confess, that I was to blame to urge him on this subject, knowing his weakness in this respect; but, when he was
blaming

blaming the manners of my country, it was natural to advert to those of his own.

“ It was my intention to stay in the country all the summer and autumn, and then to take a trip to the Continent, and winter there. I was likewise meditating on a scheme for establishing a trade at some port in Flanders.

“ Antonio grew daily more reserved and uncompanionable; and, in consequence, I went seldomer to his house. I behaved with a general civility, but with less familiarity than ever. Isabella seemed concerned at it; and this increased her husband's chagrin and ill-humour: she knew not what he would have; nor, as it seemed, could he have informed her.

“ I was never of an idle disposition, but loved always to be doing something. I used to employ myself, of an evening, with making a net. As soon as it was finished, I wanted to use it; and, the next

morning, I went out, with intention to go a-fishing, and I promised Mrs. Ringrose some fish for her dinner. When I had got about half-way to the creek, I met Don Antonio. I had my net coiled about my left arm, and a crab-tree stick in my right hand. I just touched my hat to him, and passed on: he crossed the path, and intercepted me.

“ So, Sir,” said he, “ you are going a-fishing?”

“ I am, Sir.”

“ You might, at least, have let me know it.”

“ To what purpose, Sir? Did I ever use your boat without sending you a share of the fish?”

“ No!” he believed not.

“ Then be satisfied with your fisherman, or else he will serve you no longer.”

“ I said this between jest and earnest; but he turned pale with anger. I never
loved

loved *pale anger*, for it shews a malignant heart; but I had not the least suspicion of the malicious intention of Antonio.

“ While we were talking, I coiled up the net upon my arm, and left my right side unguarded. At that instant, he stabbed me with a dagger, which he held in his hand unperceived by me. I turned quickly. I seized his hand, wrenched the dagger from him, and threw it to some distance. My passion rose above my governance.

“ Traitor!—Assassin!” said I: “ is it thus you repay my services?”

“ I seized him by the collar, with my left hand, and shook him till he gasped for breath. I thought not of my wound. I took my stick, and laid it upon him; I beat him unmercifully from head to foot, and upon every part that came in my way.

“ It is thus,” said I, “ that an English-

man resents the injury done him by an ungrateful and treacherous Italian!"

"When I let him go, he fell to the earth, as in an agony of pain. My passion abated, and I began to feel an emotion of pity for him.

"Go home," said I, "and wash yourself with vinegar, and lie a-bed a few days. I did not seek your life, though you have mine. I will now take some care of myself; but, whatever happens, remember that you were the aggressor."

"I took my pocket-handkerchief, and put it against my wound. I wound the net about my body as tight as I could, and turned about to go home. I saw Jack Roberts at a distance; I hallooed to him—he came running. As soon as he came near, I said—"Jack, take care of your master; he has met with an accident, and so have I. Lead him home directly, and put him to bed. We have fought.

Say

Say nothing to any body; but take him home directly, or he will not be able to go. I am bleeding. Ask your master who has wounded me. God be with you!"

"He went to raise his master, but was not able. I went to his assistance: we raised him. He leaned upon John's shoulder, and moved slowly, groaning bitterly.

"I walked slowly towards my own home, and began to find myself grow weak and faint with loss of blood; for, though my wound was not deep, I lost a good deal.

"When I entered the house, I sat down on the first chair I met with. Mrs. Ringrose and her daughters came about me, and enquired what was the matter? I told them, I had met with an accident; but bade them not be frightened, for I should soon get the better of it. I begged they would let a man-servant help me up

stairs, and put me to bed. Mr. Ringrose assisted me himself. As soon as I was undressed, I made a pledget of linen, and dressed my wound, tying a napkin round my body. My tenant was frightened at the sight of my shirt; but I charged him not to speak of it. He helped me to put on a clean shirt, and then I went into bed. He would fain have sent for a surgeon, but I would not suffer it. I wished this affair to be known to as few people as possible. I took some wine and water, and endeavoured to compose myself. The family paid me every kind of attention: they made me broth, and ordered one of their servants to sit up with me.

“ I had a tolerable night, and was pretty easy the next morning. About seven o’clock, Jack Roberts came to visit me. He was very desirous to know all that had passed between

between his master and me. I told him the whole, but enjoined him to secrecy.

"Jack told me, he was in great fear, both for me and his master. "You have laid it on very heavily," said he; "and he cannot stir. I have anointed him well with vinegar; but I am really afraid of the consequences."

"Did he send you here, to enquire after me?"

"No, indeed," said Jack; "but he has not told his lady. He said, he had a fall, and was very much bruised. As for the rest, he thinks of nobody but himself."

"Does he shew no concern for me? does he say nothing about me?"

"No, Sir; but he sighs and groans bitterly, and seems very unhappy."

"I begged of Jack to come in the evening, and dress my wound for me. He said, he would make some excuse, and come to me, if possible.

“ He did come, and was convinced of the malicious design of his master ; but he expressed fears of his doing well. I had no doubt of his recovery, and gave directions how he should be treated. I bade him say nothing of me, unless his master enquired after me ; and, in that case, to tell him the truth.

“ My wound was now in a very fine way, and I hoped to be well in a few days. I resolved, as soon as Antonio and myself were well, to leave the country, and go to London for a time. I proposed to write to Don Antonio, to endeavour to make him ashamed of his behaviour ; and to advise him to sell his estate here, and to return to Italy, for he would never be an Englishman.

“ Thus I proposed schemes for my future conduct. Alas ! they were all counteracted by unforeseen circumstances and events.

“ On

"On the third day after this unfortunate meeting, Jack Roberts came about noon-time. His looks were ominous.

"What is the matter now, Jack?"

"Matter enough!" said he. "In addition to your dressing, which was sufficient for him, Don Antonio is seized with the cholic. His sufferings are so great, that, I am sure, you would pity him."

"That I do sincerely!" said I.

"Thank God for that!" said Jack: "that is kind and charitable in you. But, Sir, will you come and help him?"

"That I will not do."

"I am sent to beg that you will come to him."

"Who sends you?"

"Both my master and mistress. He calls on you incessantly; and my lady begs you will come without delay."

"She knows not what has passed between us, or she would not urge it. Beside,

side, it would be dangerous to me, on more than one account. If he should not do well—if our encounter should be known—I should incur danger from an enquiry. I will not administer any medicines to him. You may give him some gin and water, as I have done ; but I will not see him again, if I can help it.”

“ Jack tried all the arguments he could think of ; but I remained inflexible, and thought myself justified in my refusal. After he was gone, I had a great many anxious and uneasy thoughts. If Antonio should die—if the bruises upon him should be imputed to me—if a coroner’s inquest should sit upon the case—all these *ifs* were uncomfortable to me.

“ I confess, that I likewise felt sorrow and remorse for the blows I had given him. But he was the aggressor. He had a design upon my life. I had none upon his: I only meant to chastise him. But, sup-
posing

posing that passion and resentment, on my part, should have the same, or worse effect, than enmity and malice had on his, could I acquit myself of his death? Wretched is the mind that is obliged to undergo such conflicts: torn between self-accusation, and self-acquittal; always arguing with itself, but never satisfied with its own decision!

“ The next morning, Roberts came to my house, and put me out of doubt, at least. As he entered the room, he said—
“ All is over !—Don Antonio is dead !”

“ I shuddered and groaned, but could make no answer.

“ He told me, that he lay in the most violent pain for two days—that Isabella had not been in bed, nor took off her cloaths, all the time—that, whenever she touched him, he screamed out, being fore with the bruises he had received—that she was quite exhausted with grief and watching,

ing, and fell into fits—that the old nurse was sent for, and she was carried into another room; and that she had miscarried, as Mrs. Cob had told him, and was confined to her bed—that Antonio's pains abated about ten o'clock, and he composed himself to sleep—that Isabella was told he was better, and she went to rest—that he sat in his master's room, and fell asleep, and did not wake till day-light. Then he went to the bed-side, and observed that his master lay in the same posture he left him in. He touched his hand, and then his face, and found that he was dead. The first thought that occurred to him, was, to come to me, and beg me to go home with him, and give orders what should be done. "We are a distracted family, Sir," said he; "and it would be very imprudent to let strangers come into the house, especially considering all the circumstances that are known to you and I."

"I started

"I started up—" You say true, John. The case requires presence of mind. I will go with you directly. There is no time to lose. May I depend upon you, John?"

"You may, Sir. I will be true and faithful to you."

"Now, then, I am ready."

"I dressed myself as quickly as possible. He came on horseback. I mounted the horse, and he walked by my side. When we came to the house, I took Mrs. Cob, the husbandman's wife, into the parlour. She looked frightened.

"Your master is dead, as John tells me. I am deeply concerned: but we must not sit down and grieve, till we have done our duty. Do not let your mistress hear a word of this sad event, till she is better able to bear it. Charge the nurse to be silent and careful. Let no one go near her but you two. John and I will see to what is necessary to be done above stairs; and do you keep

keep away all impertinent intruders of every kind."

"I left her, and went up stairs; and John followed me. We went into the room, and my heart sunk within me at the sight. Antonio was already turned black, almost* all over; and it was necessary to put the body into a state to be removed.

"I paused some minutes. John said—
"What shall we do, Sir?—Who shall lay him out?"

"That office must be done by you and me, John. Nobody else must see him at present. A thought strikes me! In Italy, they bury their dead in the cloaths they wear when living. We will dress Antonio in the cloaths he wore last, lay him straight, and then send for the carpenter to make his coffin. The women need not come about him. We will perform the last sad offices."

"Accordingly,

“Accordingly, we performed this melancholy duty. We took off the bed and bedding; we dressed him as we proposed; we then wrapped the body in the under sheet, and laid the upper one over him.

“I then sent John to the carpenter, and bade him not return without him. He came directly, and measured the body. I told him, it was the custom in Italy, to be buried in their cloaths; and that his lady would think it a mark of disrespect to do otherwise.

“I bade John, before the carpenter, go to the parsonage, and acquaint the rector with his master’s death, and give notice that he was not to be buried in woollen; that we were ready to pay the penalty, half of which would come to him, as the informer.

“I told the carpenter, that the gentleman died of a mortification in his bowels; and that he must be buried as soon as possible.

possible. He promised to make the coffin immediately.

“ After he and John were gone, I went down stairs, and into the garden, where I had a kind of fit ; for my heart was sorely oppressed, and I was almost suffocated. The idea of self-defence, which is said to be one of the first laws of nature, came to my relief ; it supported me through scenes that I cannot, even now, look back upon without horror, and still wonder how I went through them : yet I thought it would be unjust, that I should come into hazard of my life, for a man who would have killed me, and against whose life I had no premeditated design.

“ I ardently wished to get the funeral over before Isabella should know of his death ; which would prevent all future enquiry.

“ The next morning, the carpenter brought home the coffin. Assisted by John
and

and myself, the body was laid into it. We carried it down stairs, and set it into one of the parlours. After which, all the servants were permitted to see it; and then it was screwed down, and set ready to be interred.

“ Antonio died on the Wednesday, and was buried on the Sunday following: it would have been dangerous to keep him longer. All the servants attended the funeral: but I had not spirits to go; and, as I was known to be his most intimate friend, I was excused, and commended for my sensibility.

“ Isabella was told he was better, every day; and she did not know the whole truth till a week afterwards.

“ When she was told by her nurse, she was in agonies of grief and despair, which threw her back; and she was feverish and delirious several days. Nature, at length, got the better: she ate and slept,
and

and enquired into the particulars of her husband's death and burial.

"She was told, that I had taken upon myself the last duties and offices, and had performed them with great concern and attention. I took this for an indication that I might be seen ; and, as soon as she was well enough to sit up, I took the liberty to pay my respects to her.

"She had a burst of grief, upon the first sight of me ; but, after a flood of tears, she began to question me—

"Why did you not come time enough to be of service to my Antonio ?"

"Because I was very ill myself, and confined at home ; and, when I did come, I was fitter to be in my bed."

"Why did you bury him so soon ?"

"Because it was impossible to keep him longer. He died of a mortification, and the body was putrid: it would have been
enough

enough to breed a contagion to keep it longer."

"Where is he buried?"

"In consecrated ground—the church-yard of this parish."

"Alas! he had no priest to attend him!"

"The circumstances were too sudden to admit of it, or I would have sent for one: but the funeral rites were performed with every kind of decency and propriety."

"I thank you, Sir, for the trouble you have taken, when I was unable to attend to any thing."

"I am always ready to do you service, Madam; and I desire you will command me at all times."

"Pray, Sir, where do you take up your residence?"

"At my own house, Madam; but I come here every day, to receive your commands."

"I thank

"I thank you, Sir!—Oh, my Antonio! he is lost for ever!"

"Here she fell into a paroxysm of grief. I retired, fearing to make my first visit too long, but glad that the ice was broken. I ordered all the bills to be sent in, and they were given to Isabella. She gave me the key of the *escritoire*, and desired me to take money to pay them. I thanked her for this proof of her confidence; but declined it, unless she would go with me, and see what money was there. She did so; and we were both surprized to see what Antonio had accumulated within three years: it proved his sordid and avaricious mind.

"I took an account of the money, and gave her the copy. I paid the bills, and brought her the acquittances.

"This was the last of those employments which were so painful to me, and which have left a weight upon my mind,
never

never to be removed. And now, Madam, I will relieve you and myself, and will postpone the remainder of my story till another day."

Here Captain Maurice took his leave; and it was a relief to me, for I felt too strongly all the dismal circumstances of the story he had told.

I will not anticipate your judgment upon it; but leave it to your candour, and to your pity.

Adieu, my dear friend. I am, always,

Yours faithfully,

FRANCES DARNFORD.

LETTER XIII.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Will now proceed with Captain Maurice's story, in his own words—

“ In regard to what is past, Madam, I lay claim to your pity and candour; in what is to come, I expect your disapprobation and censure. I have owned myself guilty of many faults, and only implore your compassion as a penitent desirous to atone for his crimes.

“ During Antonio's life, I never entertained a thought, or a wish, to obtain the love of Isabella; but, from the time that the funeral was over, and she seemed returning to health and tranquillity, I fixed my mind upon this expectation, and determined to be her husband.

“ She

“She received my services with gratitude; she never denied me her company. If I staid away from her house a day, she always sent to know how I did, and desired to see me on the morrow. These circumstances encouraged me to persevere in my pursuit. I only knew her situation. I was her friend and servant. I resolved to be her affectionate husband, and her faithful steward. I was not over forward to declare my wishes: I never mentioned them till between three and four months after the death of Antonio——”

I interrupted him, by saying—“I think that was much too soon.”

“If you consider our intimacy, Madam, perhaps you may change your opinion. We were then upon such good terms, that it seemed as if nothing but the question was wanting.”

“Was Isabella of this opinion, Sir?”

“No; she was not. From the moment I declared myself her lover, she fell into reserve and fullness. Sometimes she left the room, and would see me no more that day; but, when I asked for her the day following, she came at the first word. She would talk freely with me upon business; or, in short, upon any subject but one—that one which engrossed all my attention.

“After the ice was broken, I obliged her to hear me often. I thought on the old saying—“Faint heart never won fair lady.” I teased her continually: I persecuted her with my addresses. Sometimes she burst into an agony of tears; sometimes she exclaimed aloud—“Oh, my Antonio!—Oh, my Giulio!—Why are not you here to protect me?”

“And had you no pity for her?” said I.

“Yes; I more than pitied—I adored her.”

“That

“ That was not the kind of pity she wanted.”

“ My passion grew by opposition. I suffered as much as she did. I have kneeled, and prayed, and wept ; but in vain.”

“ Poor lady !” said I, “ what must she have suffered !”

“ I thought you would pity her, and blame me. But, no matter. If I can engage your pity for Isabella, so as to induce you to take the charge of her, I care not what becomes of me.”

“ What a mixture of strange and generous sentiments !—Proceed, Sir : I will not again interrupt you, if I can help it.”

“ One night, that I had been very urgent with her to give me her hand, she broke from me, and ran up stairs ; and I saw her no more.

“ The next day, her servant told me, that she went into the chamber where Antonio died, and she would not come out of

it. She threw herself upon her knees, against the bed; she invoked Antonio's name; she implored him to help her. After doing this some time, she seemed as if speaking to some person actually present: she waited for his answer, and then replied again, and so continued in talk with him. The servant intreated her to go to bed in her own apartment. She answered—"No: I will not sleep any where but in this room. Here I have found my protector, and here I will remain!"

"The woman urged her to go. She bade her go to her own bed; for, if she staid all night, she would not leave the chamber.

"Mrs. Cob and her husband were gone to bed; so was the boy; and there was nobody up but Susan Dobbins.

"I should have told you, Madam, that the young woman who waited on Isabella was married, and gone away, just before
Antonio's

Antonio's sickness and death. There was in the parish a young widow, who had lately buried her husband and child : they died of the small-pox. The woman had it, and recovered. Finding she could not support herself, she resolved to go to service. She was recommended to Isabella, who took her into her family. She was an honest and tidy woman, but very vulgar and clownish ; and Isabella was disgusted with her, and did not like her about her person. I had offered to enquire after another ; but wished to see Isabella more composed, and more reconciled to my wishes, before a stranger was admitted into the family.

“ This Susan Dobbins perceived my design ; and, like a true gossip, whispered it to every one that came near her, that I was to marry her mistress as soon as the year was out, as she phrased it. I thought this would forward my scheme, and there-

fore did not contradict it ; but I charged Susan not to hint it to her mistress.

“ Isabella did not see me for two or three days after ; and, when she did, there was a wildness in her eyes that surprized and shocked me.

“ I enquired tenderly after her health. She said, she was better, and should be better still.

“ I told her, I was glad to hear it ; for that I was informed, that she neither ate nor slept well.

“ Oh, yes,” said she, “ I eat and sleep enough.”

“ Can I do any thing, Madam, to promote your health and happiness ?”

“ Why, yes ; I believe you can, Sir. I am resolved to go to Italy ; and you must carry me in your ship, Sir. Antonio will be with me ; and he will protect me from you, and from every body.”

“ I do

"I do not understand you, Madam: Antonio is dead and buried."

"Yes, I know that too well; but he will be with me, for all that."

"How can that be? I cannot understand or believe you."

"No matter. I know what I say. I know where to find him; and he comes to me whenever I call him."

"Strange fancy!—This is all conceit, Madam: you dreamed it."

"Yes, I dreamed it, both sleeping and waking: no matter how. I do not want you to know all that I do—only take care how you insult me again, for I have a friend that will resent it."

"Insult you, Madam! I would not, for the world, do any thing to offend you. You kill me with your cruelty; and this fancy is assumed, to distress and mortify me!"

“No, I do not want to kill you, or distress you. I would only keep you at your proper distance; that is all, Sir.”

“What, then, can I do, and not displease you?”

“Be humble, and modest, and keep your distance; and only come here when I send for you. That do, and I will thank you.”

“You use me very ill, Madam. I never staid away from your house, that you did not send for me the next day; and now, you would throw me to a distance.”

“I did once think you my friend, Sir. I thought I was obliged to you; but I have forgot why I thought so. Sir, you may stay to dine here, but I shall not dine with you.”

“Then I shall not stay. I do not want a dinner. I shall wait your commands—when you know your own meaning!”

“I took

" I took my leave in anger, and went home vexed and unhappy.

" I could not understand, whether her head was affected, or whether she feigned herself thus, in order to drive me away from her; but my mind rested upon the last opinion.

" Two days after, I received a message, that Madam desired to see me. I went directly. John met me with a smiling countenance—

" I am glad you are come, Sir: I hope you will be our master at last."

" God knows!" said I; " but I saw nothing like it when I was last here."

" Never mind, Sir. " Women's minds waver," says the proverb."

" I shook hands with him, and went into the parlour.

" I waited above half an hour before Isabella appeared. I bowed respectfully, and enquired after her health. She curt-

fied, and thanked me. She was silent, and looked ferious. I waited her motions, but she said nothing.

“ At last, I spoke—“ I came hither, Madam, in obedience to your commands.”

“ Did you, Sir?—Oh, now I recollect, I had something to say to you ! They tell me, I was rude to you when you was here. I ask your pardon, Sir!”

“ I bowed to her—“ You have it, Madam. I thought you unkind; but I feared you were not well, and I excused it.”

“ I am not well,” said she; “ but I do not know what ails me. I have lost my memory. I do not recollect any thing. Sometimes, I am very happy for a short time; but then, again, I feel very miserable. I do not know how it is.”

“ I am glad to see you better, Madam. I now ask you to forgive any thing I may have done to offend you.” [I kneeled to her.]

“ Yes,

“ Yes, Sir, I forgive you, and all the world!”

“ If I stay, will you give me your company at dinner?”

“ Yes, if you desire it; but I cannot eat, and I hope you will excuse me.”

“ She gave me her company at dinner, but she neither ate nor spoke. She drank a little wine and water, and she seemed thirsty and feverish. As soon as the dinner-things were taken away, she curtsied, and withdrew. I walked in the garden, fretting at her behaviour, and doubtful how to act.

“ Susan Dobbins came to me, laughing like an idiot—“ So, Madam sent for yow agen; but te’ moight bethank me!”

“ I do not understand you,” said I.

“ Why, I tould her, as how that yow were affronted, just as John tould me, and that yow would never come agen, except
she

she sent for yow; so that made her oneasy, and so she sent for yow to come to-day."

"I dare say, you meant it well: but I earnestly desire, that you will say nothing of this kind to your lady in future."

"Well, I 'on't, then. If yow understand one another, that's enough."

"Pray, tell me, does she still fancy that her husband is with her?"

"Aye, that she do, sure enough: she hold long talk with him, and spake so natural, that I am sometimes sort of afraid, that there is somebody else in the room beside ourselves; or else, that her poor head ha' got a crack in it."

"Well, do not speak of it out of the house: do not let her be long alone; watch all her motions, and let me know how she does every day. Try to amuse her from thinking too much; try to excite her to eat; make her broth, and get her every
thing

thing she can ask or wish for. Go to her now. I will see you again in a few days."

"Thus we went on for several weeks. I called every day, but did not stay dinner except she asked me.

"One day, she seemed better, and she entered into conversation with me. She asked me to go with her to Italy.

"And what will you do there, Madam?"

"I would go and board in a convent for a time; and, if I liked it, I would stay there always."

"This would be a dismal and uncomfortable life for you."

"I do not think so: perhaps, I might be happier there than here."

"What hinders you to be happy here?"

"I do not know," said she: and was silent.

"I will carry you to Italy, upon one condition: give me your hand, make me
your

your husband, give me a right to be your protector, and I will go with you all the world over."

"No—no—no!" said she; and rose to go away.

"I took her hand—"Stay a minute longer—hear what I have to say. Perhaps, I have urged you too soon. Let us compromise. I will not again urge you on this subject, till your year of widowhood is fully expired; but, then, I must hope you will receive me more graciously."

"I kissed her hand, and released it. She went away from me, and ran up stairs. I went home, chagrined, and out of spirits. I was wholly unsettled, and took no pleasure in any thing, but the hope that she would one day be mine."

"Surely, Sir," said I, "it would have been wiser in you to give over the pursuit, when you found the lady so averse to it."

"Perhaps

“ Perhaps so, Madam: but I did not give it over, as you shall hear.

“ I continued my attentions to the lady, without mentioning our marriage, till the year was compleated, and the fatal day had passed over us; which I kept with many sighs, and some tears.

“ Isabella did not reckon the days and weeks, as I did. She knew not the anniversary of her loss, and I was glad that she did not: but she continued in the same strange way, talking with the idea of her husband, and telling him every thing that happened.

“ I now resumed my addresses and importunities. I urged her to be mine, to turn her thoughts from fancies and conceits, and meet her happiness in her lover’s arms.

“ She was, for the most part, silent and sullen; but sometimes broke out into fits of passion, and even frenzy. I flattered myself,

myself, that if once she found herself married to me, she would be reconciled to her situation and to me, and a new scene of happiness would arise to us both.

“ With this in view, I contrived to dress John as a priest of the Romish Church, and prepared him to read the ceremony to us. I besought her to consent to it's being performed. I begged, prayed, soothed, and threatened, in turn. I tried to frighten her into a marriage; and, when she should be reconciled to her situation, I always meant to have it solemnized in a legal way.

“ Many distressful scenes followed: I cannot recite them all to you; yet I must, in my own behalf, assure you, that I never attempted to use violence, nor to commit any act of indecency.

“ One evening, when I had tried all the arts of persuasion, I bade Susan call in the priest.

priest. When John entered, she fell into hysteric fits. I said, it must be now or never, and bade him perform his office.

“ When she recovered, she found her hand in mine, and the supposed priest giving the nuptial benediction. She gave a shriek, and went into fits again.

“ Susan and I supported her. I poured some water down her throat, and she revived again.

“ As soon as her senses returned, I said—“ I thank you, father, for your good offices. When Isabella is better reconciled to her situation, we will hope to see you here again.”

“ He went away, wishing us happy together.

“ I then said every thing soothing and comfortable. I told her, I was entirely at her command, as before; and that I would take no advantage of the holy rites that made her mine—That she was free

to retire to her own apartment whenever she pleased.

“ From that time, I took possession of the house. I slept there, but in a distant part of the house from Isabella’s apartment. She was in passions of grief and frenzy all the night; but, in the day-time, she composed herself by her ideal conversations with her husband.

“ Susan told her, that I was her husband. She denied it, and called upon Antonio, to witness to the contrary.

“ I enjoyed no advantage from this supposed marriage, but that of being acknowledged by the servants as their master. They told it through the village, that we were married; and it was believed by all the inhabitants of the parish.

“ From the time of our supposed marriage, Isabella gave me very little of her company. She refused to come down stairs to dinner. She would sometimes come into
the

the library, or walk in the gallery; but, if she heard any body coming, she retreated into her chamber. I sometimes came into the gallery, and conversed with her as she stood in the library; but, if I offered to come any farther, she went into the bed-chamber, and locked the door.

“ I have argued with her by the hour, beseeching her to leave that part of the house, and come into her former apartment; yet she would never listen to it, but always said, in that chamber she had a friend that would protect her.

“ Susan slept in a couch-bed, in the library. I ordered her to sleep in the chamber with her mistress; but she said, she could not—that she was scared out of her senses, and conceited that something more than themselves was in the room, and especially at night.

“ This notion gained ground daily, and the under-servants reported that the house

was

was haunted; which gave me concern, and I cast about how to put an end to it; which I was certain could not be done, without obliging Isabella to quit that chamber, and then to shut it up entirely."

"Surely," said I, "you could not be so cruel. It was enough to drive her to distraction and desperation."

"I expected, Madam," said he, "that you would interrupt me."

"It is with difficulty I have refrained speaking so long."

"Have patience a little longer. You may blame me; but, when you have heard all, perhaps you may pity me."

"My pity is engrossed by the poor sufferer."

"Already are you biased? What must I expect hereafter?"

"I hope there is nothing worse, to make me execrate you?"

"Worse, or better, you must hear all;

or

or you will think worse of me than you ought. I did not go the lengths that you suppose."

"You went much farther than I can approve, or allow."

"I went far enough to spoil my peace; and, if I had been more resolute, perhaps I had suffered less. He who is a compleat villain, suffers less than he who stops short of the last extremities, both in regard to himself and others."

Here I will finish this sheet; and subscribe myself,

Yours, always, and equally,

FRANCES DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

THOUGH Captain Maurice had forfeited my good opinion, I was desirous to hear the rest of his story; and to know how far it might be in my power to be of service to this poor afflicted lady, whose sufferings proceeded from real grief and unfeigned misfortune.

I desired the strange man to proceed with his narration.

“ I resolved,” said he, “ to try fair means to get her out of that fatal chamber, which I shuddered at approaching. Having encouraged myself with a bottle of wine, I followed her one night into this room. Susan Dobbins was present. I only meant to conduct her to her former apartment, and to leave her there.

“ At

“ At the sight of me, she shrieked loudly; and ran to a corner of the room, as if for safety. There stood an old-fashioned high-backed great chair: she had hung upon it a suit of cloaths of Antonio’s, and buttoned it over the chair; and her disturbed imagination represented to her the idea of Antonio’s being present there. She threw herself into the chair; she threw the sleeves of the coat over her, and then composed herself.

“ There! there! Now I am safe!—He dares not take me out of your arms!”

“ My dearest Isabella,” said I, “ let me persuade you to leave this room, and return to your own apartment. I swear to you, that I will leave you to your repose!”

“ I do not mind his foolish talking—no, my love, I am yours only. Do not be uneasy; I promise you, I will never marry any other man.”

“ Hear me, Isabella! It is for your sake

I ask you to go from this chamber: it is this place that disturbs you, and makes you thus; you will never be well while you stay here."

"Let him talk on," said she; "do not mind him. I will never leave you, my Antonio; no, never! Maurice, begone!"

"Again, on my knees, I besought her to come away.

"Oh," said she, "you must not fight! I will hinder that—He is not the man we once thought him. You were in the right, my love; but I was very wrong, to take his part against you: that was very wicked of me, but I have been punished for it.—Go, man! get away from me! Are you not ashamed to come here?"

"Susan Dobbins then spoke—"There, Sir! you have heard her with your own ears; I hope you will believe me another time."

"I was provoked, and ashamed, to be
thus

thus got the better of. I advanced towards her, intending to take her into my custody. She rose up, without fear, but animated with strong resolution—

“ Maurice, if you approach a step farther, you will meet your punishment! Antonio dares to fight you; for all you have said is false.”

“ She stood, as if interposing between him and me. Sometimes she went to him, as it seemed; sometimes she came towards me. She talked incessantly to one and the other. She said the strangest things that can be imagined. She raised a kind of terror, that subdued me: and, at last, she said—“ No, I do not believe that Maurice killed you, because you lived three days after—But, how could he hurt you, and leave no wound?”

“ My heart smote me: I was struck with horror; my knees knocked together, and I retreated slowly out of the room. I

went backward; and, as I came past the bed, I fell over a chair that stood in my way; and, crawling upon my hands and knees, slunk away, baffled and ashamed, and went to my own apartment, where I spent a wretched night, without sleep or composure.

“ I am naturally bold and intrepid; but never was a man’s courage more completely subdued than mine, on that fatal night. I never shall forget it while I live!

“ The next day, I was almost in a state of distraction; alarmed, ashamed, incensed, unable to form a resolution, yet unwilling to relinquish my pursuit.

“ I got on horseback, and rode for several hours: came home to dinner, and afterwards slept in a great chair for a considerable time. I enquired after Isabella, and was told, that she did not go to bed till day-light, but had then a comfortable sleep of more than five hours. Susan told

me,

me, she dared not sleep in her chamber, but brought her bed into the library, and slept there.

“ Things remained in this state several weeks. I went into the room opposite to Isabella's, on the other side of the library, where I watched her motions. She asked Susan where I was ; and she said, she could not tell certainly, but believed I was walking in the garden. “ Then I will walk too,” said she.

“ She came through the library, and went to walk in the gallery. I snatched the opportunity. I sprung through the library, double-locked the door of her chamber, and put the key into my pocket.

“ When she returned, she was surprized and grieved. She tried at the lock, and found it fastened against her. She called to Susan, who protested she knew nothing of the key. She fell into a passion, stamped

and tore; and, having exhausted her strength, fell into a swoon.

“ I then stepped forward; and, assisted by Susan, carried her into the dressing-room, between the two chambers in the gallery, and there left her to the care of Susan; but waited within hearing, in case she should want any farther assistance.

“ When she returned to life and her senses, she raved against those who had locked her out of her own chamber, and asked who it was.

“ Susan said, she believed it was her master.

“ She exclaimed—“ What master?”

“ Captain Maurice, Madam.”

“ You have no master!”

“ Yes, I have. Captain Maurice is my master, and yours too.”

“ She raved against me till her strength failed her, and then fainted again, and continued several hours in this way. At length,

length, she grew quieter; and Susan, with Mrs. Cob's help, put her to bed.

"She called on Antonio, and her son Giulio, incessantly; till wearied Nature took pity on her, and lulled her into repose."

"Yet you took no pity on her," said I, unable to keep silence.

"Yes, I did," he answered. "I was clear she would never recover so long as she staid in that chamber, fatal to her and me."

"We went on thus for a few days; when Mrs. Cob complained, that Susan and she were quite worn out, and they could not support the fatigue of their daily work, and watching all night with their mistress. I asked what she would advise me to do?

"Sir," said she, "there is a person in the neighbourhood, that is used to nurse people that are out of their right mind.

She is just now at liberty, and came here to offer her service yesterday, while you were gone out; so I bade her come again to-day, and she is now in the house."

"I will come and speak to her," said I, and went to her immediately. I enquired where she had been, and who was to give her a character. She shewed me a written one, from the surgeon and apothecary in the next parish; signifying that she had been employed in several families where he attended, and that he would be answerable for her honesty and fidelity. I told her, she might come directly; and desired her to treat the lady with the utmost attention and tenderness. She bragged of her knowledge in such cases; and said, she must be left to her own method.

"Mrs. Burton entered upon her office immediately. I introduced her to Isabella, who was sitting in the dressing-room.

Susan

Susan was standing by her; and she seemed quiet, and half-asleep.

“At the sight of us, she started, and looked angry. She held up her hand in a threatening attitude. I approached her, and spoke—

“My dearest Isabella, I have brought a gentlewoman to wait on you, to nurse you, to comfort you, and to make you well.”

“She looked disdainfully on her, and on me. She held up her hand, as before. I drew near her; I took her other hand, and kissed it. She gave me a blow with her right-hand, that surprized me: it made my face glow for a long time after.

“Mrs. Burton said—“Oh fie, Madam! Is this your behaviour to your husband?”

“She looked at her scornfully, and held up her hand, in defiance.

“I said—“You must be gentle and obliging to her.”

“ She smiled—“ I can perceive that you have been too gentle to her ; and I see how she returns it. You should be more resolute with her.”

“ Not so,” said I ; “ nor will I suffer any one to treat her roughly. Observe what I say, Mrs. Burton, or you will not stay here.”

“ Very well, Sir,” said she : I will endeavour to oblige her and you.”

“ Isabella stamped with her foot, and shewed signs of impatience. I withdrew, and left her to the care of Mrs. Burton.

“ As I found the sight of me discomposed her, I only saw her by stratagem, now and then trying whether she would endure it more patiently ; but every experiment I made, served to confirm me in opinion, that she never would love me, nor admit me to the privileges of an husband.

“ After

“ After Mrs. Burton had been some weeks in the family, Susan Dobbins was often hinting to me something that she feared to explain. I desired her to speak out, and fear nothing.

“ After much prefacing, she told me, that, in her mind, Mrs. Burton used her mistress very ill ; but begged I would not let it be said that she had told tales of her : that was her way of speaking.

“ I determined to know the truth of it, and to discharge Mrs. Burton the first opportunity.

“ A few nights afterwards, as I was going to bed, it came into my head to listen at the door of Isabella’s room. I heard Mrs. Burton speaking in a loud and insolent tone of voice—“ You shall, Madam—I tell you, you shall do as I order you—What, do you think to make a fool of me, as you do of all the rest?—I know better how to manage you—I have broken

a higher spirit than yours—Lie still, and go to sleep, or——”

“ At that moment, I tapt at the door. Mrs. Burton came, and opened it.

“ How dare you speak in that manner to the woman I love as my soul ?”

“ Oh, dear Sir! is it you?—They tell me, that, though you have been married to her many months, you have not had courage enough to bed her. Come in, Sir; and I will bring her to your lure, I warrant: you shall go to bed to her now, if you please, upon condition that you give me a pair of gloves, and a favour, to-morrow morning.”

“ I made her no answer, but went into the room. I saw the dear faint lying like a lamb under the hand of the butcher. My heart smote me, and I felt as if a dagger was run through me. I kneeled by the bed-side, and begged her to speak to me.

“ Oh,

“ Oh, my Isabella ! give me your hand, and speak one kind word to me, and I will send this woman away from you ! she shall never approach you more !”

“ She lay with her face into the pillow, and I feared she would be suffocated. I offered to take her hand.—Oh, Madam ! how shall I speak it?—Her dear hands were tied behind her, and her feet tied together ! I felt as if my heart was bursting. “ Oh, vile woman !” said I ; “ brute !—monster ! is it thus you treat the fairest of women ?—Run up stairs, and call Susan this moment ; and come not again into my sight !—I will speak to you to-morrow.”

“ She began to apologize.

“ Get out of my sight this moment, or I shall do you a mischief !”

“ She ran up stairs, and sent Susan in a few minutes.

“ I cut the strings that tied those fair hands. I begged her to pardon me for giving

giving that woman the charge of her. The moment her hands were at liberty, she rolled herself up in the bed-cloaths, so that I could not see her face, nor any part of her. Susan came down. I bade her take care of her mistress, unfold the bed-cloaths, and put her to bed, and stay with her all the night. "I am not going to bed. I will come again in an hour, to know how she does. If she should drop asleep, come to my room, and let me know it."

"I retired to my own room, in a violent agitation of spirits. My heart was touched. I reflected upon the trouble I had given that sweet and amiable woman. I had wished a thousand times to have her at an advantage; but, when that moment came, my heart would not suffer me to avail myself of it: I was not so hardened a villain. That vile woman's wickedness awoke my compassion and remorse. I felt
the

the most true compunction for the part I had acted by her, and the most ardent wish to make atonement for it.

“ As soon as I was alone, I threw myself upon my knees. I prayed to Heaven to restore her, and to forgive me. I vowed that I would no more insult her with my importunities, but would do every thing in my power to serve and save her. My heart was softened to such a degree, that I wept like a chidden infant, and found my heart relieved by it.

“ After some hours spent in this way, I returned into the gallery, and tapped softly at the door. Susan came; and, in a whisper, told me, her mistress was not asleep, but that she lay quieter. I laid my finger on my lip, shut the door, and went back to my own chamber. I had no call to sleep. I walked about the whole night, ruminating on the past, and planning schemes for the future.

“ As

“ As soon as I heard Cob and his wife stirring, I went down stairs. I told them what had past with Mrs. Burton, and ordered them to call me as soon as she came among them. They did so, and I went down to speak to her. In the interim, I considered that it was best to part with her upon good terms, lest she should make bad reports about the neighbourhood; that I would pay her handsomely, and send her away satisfied.

“ She would have argued with me, on the propriety of her method of treating the lady; but I desired her to say no more, only make her demand. She did so, and I paid her something more; and told her, if we had any farther need of her service, we would let her know it.

“ I felt some relief to my mind, after I had dismissed Mrs. Burton. I then wished to find a person of good heart and character,

rafter, to whom I could trust the care of this unhappy and innocent creature, and ease my mind of the burthen it laboured under; for I resolved to use the power I had acquired over her, for her benefit in future.

“ The house was grown melancholy and disagreeable to me. I was so depressed in mind, that I took no pleasure in any thing.

“ John Roberts took the liberty of advising me to go abroad again, and to give up my pursuit of Isabella, which, he said, (very truly) had only made her miserable, and myself too. I told him, I had already resolved upon something of this kind; and, as soon as I could meet with a proper person to take charge of Isabella, I would go to the Continent. John desired to continue my servant, and to go with me. I readily accepted his offer, and prepared to realize this plan.

“ In

“ In the course of this year, Madam, I had placed my Charlotte under your care; and was pleased with, and proud of, her improvements.

“ I now went to Mrs. Sorling’s, and consulted her about putting my wife (so I called her) under your care. She said, if you would accept the charge, I might think myself a fortunate man; but she doubted whether I would undertake it.

“ Now, Madam, I will add a few particulars, in the hope they may induce you to do it—

“ Ifabella is generally melancholy and fullen; yet she has sometimes fits of frenzy, but is never mischievous to herself, or others. She sometimes refuses her food; but Nature resumes her rights, and then she eats greedily. She is thin and emaciated: she seldom speaks; but she prays often, and mostly mentally. There is a poor woman who assists Susan in the care
of

of her. If she is refractory, Susan threatens to send for Mrs. Burton ; and that makes her comply with whatever she desires. She is also afraid of me, and I cannot prevail upon her to endure my company ; but, when I am absent, she is quiet and patient.

“ This, Madam, is the true account of our situation. And now, let me implore you, for pity’s sake, to accept the charge of this poor, unhappy lady !—I preserve the appearance of a power over her, only for her service : she might otherwise be subject to worse treatment.

“ I will make you my tenant at the mansion-house : Isabella and my Charlotte shall be your boarders. I will settle the money I leave in the funds upon Charlotte irrevocably ; and I will request you to accept the office of her guardian. I will give you a power to receive the rents of my farm during my absence. When all
these

these points are settled, I will go abroad, and try to recover my health and my peace. Deign, Madam, to accept this kind and charitable office!—I will pray to God to influence your mind in my behalf!”

He kneeled down, and lifted up his eyes, which were swimming in tears: I could not refrain mine.

“You are moved,” said he; “thank God for it!—You will do nothing to repent of!—Your goodness will be rewarded, both here and hereafter!”

He stopped, and wept in silence.

After a pause, I said—“Sir, I do not promise to do what you require: I fear it may be too much for my health and spirits.”

“You can but try, Madam. If you find it so, you need only see that poor Isabella is used well by her attendants, and direct

direct what is to be done for her service. Do not refuse this, I beseech you!"

"Well, Sir, I will consider of it. But I should wish to see the house, and the lady, before I give a decisive answer."

"You shall do so, Madam. I will attend you whenever you please."

I promised that I would take this journey; and the unhappy man was cheered by it. He went away, thanking and blessing me.

It came into my mind, that this poor lady had never been attended by any person that could be her companion or comforter. I resolved to see her, and to judge whether there were any hopes of her recovery, by proper treatment, and the company of a friend. This idea I kept to myself, and determined to try the experiment.

I proposed to Captain Maurice, that Charlotte Brady should go with us; and
that

that she should be his companion, while I attended on Isabella. He gladly consented to it.

The following week, we set out on this journey. My next letter will bring you an account of the success of it.

In the mean time, I will send away this packet.

Ever yours faithfully,

F. DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Implore your mercy and compassion in behalf of Captain Maurice. Do not be too severe in your judgment of him. Though he has been very wrong in his persecution of Isabella, and though her sufferings were the result of his perseverance, it was not his intention that she should suffer; and accidental circumstances had a share in it.

But, look upon him in another, and more favourable light—as a man who had one object in view, which he had long pursued with unceasing assiduity—that object in his power, and passion pleading for its gratification. Behold him struck with sorrow and repentance; not light and momentary, but deep and serious! he fore-
goes

goes all his purposes, and studies to make atonement by every means he can think of. He settles his affairs; provides for the welfare and comfort of the persons most dear to him; gives up the greatest part of his property, and goes, with a heavy heart, to seek a new destiny in a foreign land!

Let these circumstances have their due effect upon your mind. Consider that human nature is frail, and liable to error. There are few people who have not some secret faults, that are concealed from the world's knowledge, and that prey upon the heart in it's deepest recesses, for which there is no other remedy "*than the heart's sorrow, and a clear life ensuing.*" To this, and to the mercy of Heaven, I leave this unhappy man; and shall now give you an account of my first journey.

Captain Maurice, Charlotte Brady, and myself, went in a post-chaise to N—, where

where we slept one night, and reached the end of our journey by noon the next day.

We were met, within a mile of the house, by a clown driving a chaise-cart, into which we got with our trunk. Captain Maurice took the reins ; and the man walked before us, and opened the gates for us. He drove us round to the front of the house. It is a very pretty one, fashed and modernized, and pleasantly situated. It looked light and chearful, and had nothing ominous nor melancholy in it's appearance. He rung the bell, and a woman-servant came to the door.

" So, Mrs. Cob," said he ; " did your husband receive my letter ?"

" Yes, Sir ; and we have done all that you ordered."

He said—" I have brought this lady to visit your mistress, and in hope that she will take the charge of her when I am

gone abroad. She understands how to treat people in her unhappy situation."

The woman shook her head, as if afraid he had brought another Mrs. Burton.

We went into the hall, which is, indeed, too large for the house. It is decorated with stags heads, hunting-horns, and other emblems of the chase. I suppose, it's former owners were hunting squires.

Captain Maurice shewed us the parlours, and a large store-room. He then led us up stairs. Over the hall and the store-room were three good-sized rooms, two bed-chambers, and a dressing-room. There was a gallery the whole length, at the end of the library, which has been often mentioned; and a chamber on each side of it.

I was struck with the sight of a new door on the outside of the door-case. I looked at Maurice, and he changed colour.

"That

“That is the door,” said he, “that leads to the chamber——”

“I understand you, Sir.”

“No, not quite,” said he. “While Mrs. Burton was here, I made them bring all Isabella’s cloaths, linen, and every thing, out of this room. I took away the bedding, and every thing likely to be of use to her. I then caused a new outside door to be put up; and, instead of a lock, it is screwed into the door-case, so that it cannot easily be opened. Now, that it is wholly shut up, there is an end to all the foolish talking that I have told you of.”

“In my opinion, Sir, it was likely to be the more talked of.”

“I do not find it so, Madam. I am convinced that room was the cause of Isabella’s losing her reason; and it had liked to have turned all the heads in the family.

It shall never be opened again, while I have any power in this house."

I said no more; and he seemed glad to get away from the subject. We returned into the gallery, and he tapped at the door of the dressing-room. A woman opened it.

"Susan," said he, "how is your mistress?"

"Much the same, Sir. She is frightened now, at your knocking."

"I have brought a lady to visit her, who understands her case.—Here, Madam, I leave you. Charlotte and I will go down stairs."

I followed Susan into the room. There sat the poor lady in a great chair; her face reclined against the side of it. She had on a white loose morning gown, tied round her waist; and a rosary by her side. She was the wreck of beauty; pale and emaciated, but finely made; and, thus simply dressed, she looked like a person of superior

perior degree and consequence. At my appearance, she started, and threw her handkerchief over her face, as wishing to hide herself from every body.

Susan went and bawled in her ear, as if she was deaf—"My master ha' brought a lady to visit yow, and he pray you to behave kindly to her."

She threw back her hand, as if to forbid my approach. I felt an awkwardness about me, as if intruding myself upon her. She would not deign to look upon me, but sat in all the silent majesty of woe.

I sat down near her, and spoke to her in the softest tone of voice—"My dear lady, I am not come hither out of impertinent curiosity, but to try whether I can be of any service to you. I shall not stay, if you forbid me. But see me, and know me, before you reject my services."

She waved her hand for me to leave her.

"I know, and pity your misfortunes,

H 3

Madam.

Madam. I, too, have suffered; and, being a child of Sorrow myself, I can sympathize with you; and, perhaps, may be enabled to be your comforter."

She clapped her hands together, and seemed to pray mentally.

I went on—"I am not come to assume any authority over you, but to see that every one does their duty to you. Deign, Madam, to look at me; and accept my intentions, though you should refuse my personal attendance on you."

She sighed deeply, and again waved her hand to me.

"Cannot you persuade the lady to look at me, and hear me?" said I.

Susan spoke to her in a vulgar and cajoling manner. She called her, her pretty dear, and behaved with a disgusting familiarity.

She stamped with her foot, and pointed to the door.

I said—

I said—"I will withdraw for the present; and, when your lady is disposed to see me, I will wait on her.

"Consider, my dear lady, that you want a friend and companion; and do not drive away from you the person who comes only to assist you."

So saying, I left the room, and went down stairs to Maurice and his Charlotte, where I told him all that had passed.

After dinner, I made a second attempt to gain her attention; but with no better success. I left her in the evening, and walked in the garden till it grew duskish.

There was a long terrass-walk, from whence you descended to the garden, which was all upon a declivity; and, at the bottom, a piece of water. It was surrounded by a good wall, with fruit-trees planted against it. The ground was divided into four quarters, bounded with espaliers; and, within, full of herbs and roots, for the use

of the family. On the opposite side, the ground rose; and there was, on all sides, an agreeable prospect, and great capabilities of improvement.

Captain Maurice went to his farmhouse, for he had not slept at the mansion since he resolved to give up Isabella. Charlotte and I slept together in a room out of the gallery, and we rested comfortably in our new lodging.

As soon as I was dressed the next morning, I desired to speak with Susan, and enquired whether her mistress was willing to see me.

She told me, that Madam had not forgot my visit; that she asked, whether I was not Mrs. Burton in disguise. Susan told her, that I was quite another person.

“I thought,” said she, “that the voice was not like Mrs. Burton’s: but she might alter that, you know.”

“The

“The only way to know that, was to look at her,” said Susan.

She said, she was afraid I should get her into my power ; but, if I should call again, she would look at me.

I bade Susan tell her, I was come again, and desired she would see me.

In a quarter of an hour, Susan came to conduct me to her. I went with more courage, and pleased that she recollected me.

When I entered the room, she was sitting in her chair, as before. She held her hand partly over her eyes, as if the light was painful to her ; and looked earnestly at me. I curtsied to her, wished her a good morning, and hoped she was better to-day. She was silent.

Susan said—“ My dear creature, why don’t you speak to the lady ?—Pray, do, my dear.”

“ I think you treat the lady in too fami-

liar a manner," said I : " as your mistress, you ought to shew her more respect."

" Respect!—Lord help us ! I have all the respect in the world for her ! I loves her, and pities her ; and I humours her like a child."

" So I think, Susan : but she requires to be humoured as a woman, and as a lady very much your superior, notwithstanding her unfortunate situation."

" Lack-a-day ! I don't mean any disrespect, not I."

" I dare say, not. I have heard that you have been very faithful to her, and I think very well of you : but still I wish you to pay her a little more respect ; for, I think, she would like you the better."

I took a chair close to her. I took her hand in mine. She gazed at me till she abashed me. I spoke to her again, and asked her, whether she saw any thing in my face that displeased her ?

She

She spoke—"No, I think you are not Mrs. Burton, nor yet Mr. Maurice; but, who are you, Madam?"

"My name is Frances Darnford; and I wish to be called your friend. I am come to visit you, and to comfort you."

"Who sent you, pray?"

"I heard of your ill health, Madam: and I hoped it might be in my power to assist you; and, perhaps, to make you well."

"No, never; never more shall I be well!" She sighed deeply.

"Do not despair of it. Sometimes, Heaven permits a heavy cloud to pass over us; but, if we remain patiently, and trust in God, we shall, in time, recover the daylight again."

"That is very pretty; I like it. Are you a Christian?"

"I hope so, my dear lady; I endeavour to be so."

“ I am glad to hear it. I have not been among Christians a great while.”

“ Lord ha’ mercy !” said Susan, “ how can you say so? We be all Christians here.”

“ We will speak farther on this subject another time.—Will you, Madam, permit me to breakfast with you?”

“ I have nothing to give you,” said the poor lady; “ I have none for myself !”

“ You may have what you please,” said Susan: “ you need only tell me what you please to have.”

“ No, I have none—I want none—I have left off eating—it don’t agree with me.”

“ Ah, but you can eat a fly bit in a corner, sometimes,” said Susan.

“ You are very indiscreet to say so. You should not speak of these things before her——Will you order the breakfast to be brought into this room—And will
you,

you, Madam, permit me to make tea here?"

"If you please, Madam. It was very good of you to bring some with you: there was none in the house."

I humoured this thought, and begged her to partake of it.

The tea-equipage was brought, and I made tea. I desired Susan to tell the young lady, to wait till the gentleman came, and to breakfast with him.

I told the lady, that I had a young person under my care with me; but, as she was averse to company, I had left her below-stairs. She bowed to me. I intreated her to partake of the breakfast. She would not eat; but she drank a cup of tea, and thanked me for it.

I told her, if she would invite me, I would stay and dine with her. She wished she had any thing to give me; but said, there was nothing in the house but poverty
and

and misery. I answered for the dinner; but she cared not to speak of it.

When the breakfast-things were taken away, I offered to stay with her, till her servant had taken her's, and desired she would come then and relieve me. I tried to engage her in conversation; but she answered me only Yes, and No.

I kept silence some time. She looked at me—

“ Pray, talk again; I like to hear you.”

“ I accept the omen!” said I: “ it gives me hopes, that you will often hear me with pleasure.”

I talked away; and she listened attentively, but said little.

When Susan returned, I took my leave, saying, I would wait on her at dinner. She shook her head, but seemed not displeased with my visit.

I retired to my room, and considered with myself, whether I should give hopes

to

to Maurice of her recovery. It was not impossible that he might resume his former designs upon her. I resolved to be very cautious of what I said to him upon the subject.

When I saw him, I told him, that the lady had endured me in her sight; and I did not despair of one day rivalling Susan in her favour. He asked, what I thought of her; and whether he might encourage any hopes of her recovery?

I said, it was impossible to form any judgment upon so short a knowledge of her, but that I perceived she was sensible of both good and ill treatment; that she still feared Mrs. Burton, and dreaded her return.

I enquired, where was his servant, John Roberts? He said, he had sent him to Harwich, and ordered him to wait for him there.

I walked over the grounds with him
and

and Charlotte, and returned to dinner. I told him my intention of eating in Isabella's room, in order to excite her to partake with me; and he thanked me for the thought.

I tried to persuade her to eat, but she refused me. After I had dined, I sopped a piece of bread in a glass of wine and water, and gave her a few pieces thus moistened; she swallowed them, and drank the liquor. Soon after, she laid her hand upon her heart, and seemed cheered by it.

I sat with her till Susan had dined, and came back to her. Then I left her, and I saw her no more that day. I wanted to see whether my company was wished for or not. The next day, Susan told me she had asked, when that lady would come again. She feared she had behaved rudely to me, and that I would come no more.

This experiment answered to my wishes; and I resolved to make another,
that

that would be likely to enable me to decide the question, whether I should take her under my care, or not.

I sent word, that I would wait on her to dinner, if agreeable. The answer was, she should be obliged, if I would bring my dinner with me.

I went, when the dinner was ready, with the hopes that she would expect me some time. She did so; and was uneasy that I came no sooner.

She rose to meet me, and I embraced her. She opened her eyes wider than I had seen them, for they were commonly half-closed. She looked pleased at my coming, and I seemed rejoiced to see her. Dinner was served up. I asked no questions, whether she would eat, but fed her from my own plate: she ate several morsels of meat thus, and I gave her sopped bread as before.

As soon as the dinner-things were removed,

moved, and Susan was gone down stairs, I tried my second experiment.

I drew my chair close to hers, took her hand in mine, and spoke to her in Italian. I asked her to accept my friendship, and give me her's in return, which I intended to deserve of her.

She was surprized, and gratified. Her heart heaved with sighs. She leaned her head upon my shoulder, and burst into a passion of tears; the happy proof that I hoped to receive of her sensibility, and of the probability of her recovery. She shed torrents of tears, that relieved her overburthened heart; mine accompanied them, and mixed with them, as they flowed into her lap.

After they were abated, I spoke. I said all that I could think of, to comfort and compose her mind. She saw me weep with her, and looked at me with tenderness and gratitude.

When

When she was somewhat composed, I asked her, whether she should like that I should come and stay some time with her, and be her companion and friend?

She said—"Oh, yes, yes, yes!" it would be the greatest consolation this world could give her—"but, if Maurice should know it, he would take you away from me."

I seized the opportunity of telling her, that Maurice was soon going abroad, and that I would come to her when he was gone.

She listened to me attentively, and was pleased with the intelligence I gave her. Susan returned, and was surprized to hear us talk in a language she could not understand.

When I offered to leave her, she besought me to stay, and never leave her again. I told her, that I must return home to my friends, and settle my affairs; but I would certainly return to her, after some time—

time—That I should see her every day while I staid in the village, and that I was not going immediately. She was very unwilling to part with me. I told her, I must leave her then, but would see her again on the morrow.

She desired me to come sooner than to-day, and I promised to do so.

When I returned to Maurice, I told him that I had spoken to Isabella in Italian, and that she was reconciled to my company, and was not unwilling that I should come and stay with her.

He took occasion to urge me to promise him to accept the charge of her. I said, if I saw nothing worse than I had seen, I would, and that she was the most patient sufferer that I ever knew.

He said, she was impatient enough whenever she was opposed. I observed, that proved the necessity of indulgence to her,
and

and that I should use no other method. He thanked me for my compliance.

Isabella grew every day fonder of my company. I promised her, that I would come and stay with her, upon condition that she would oblige me, in complying with what I desired, in regard to eating, and doing what was good for her health. She promised to do all that I should require of her.

I ordered Susan to bring her, every morning, half a pint of milk, warm from the cow, and put a tea-cup of hot water into it; and, if she did not chuse to take it immediately, to leave it in her room till she did. I saw her take it several mornings, and begged her to continue it.

I introduced Charlotte to her, and desired her to pay her great attention, and endeavour to make herself agreeable to her. She supposed her to be my daughter; but I assured her, she was only my ward. I
asked

asked her permission to bring Charlotte with me when I should come again.

She said—"Any friend of yours will be welcome; but you must bring your own provisions."

I undertook to provide for us and the family. She thanked me for my goodness.

"Pray, tell me your name?"

I did so.

"Pray write it down, for I have no memory."

I asked, if she had not a pocket-book?

She did not know.

Susan found it, and I wrote my name in a leaf of it.

She was pleased with it, and read it over and over—"Frances—Francisca—Francesina. Shall I call you Donna Francesina?"

"Call me what you please, so you add the name of friend to it."

"Il caro Amica Donna Francesina!"
Darnford she made a strange word of; but

I was

I was glad to see her amuse herself with any thing.

I wrote down the name of Charlotte Brady, and desired her to remember that also; and Charlotte begged her, very prettily, to do her name the honour to remember it.

In short, we amused her with such trifles, and took off her attention to her own melancholy thoughts, and the recollections of the causes of her sorrows.

Captain Maurice brought his tenants, Mr. and Mrs. Ringrose, to pay their respects to me, one afternoon. He had told them every thing that could prepossess them in my favour, and also his design of going abroad, and leaving Isabella in my care. He desired Mr. Ringrose to overlook Richard Cob, and see that he did his duty during his absence. Before them, he gave me the power to dismiss all, or any of the
servants,

servants, whom I should disapprove; and he repeated it to all the servants.

Mr. Ringrose promised to do me every service in his power—and his wife said, she hoped I would neighbour with her; for that Don Antonio, and his lady (now Mrs. Maurice) were too proud to take any notice of them, and they thought it too great an honour for her to sit at the same table with them.

Maurice said—"That is past; let us say no more of it. Mrs. Darnford will, I am sure, acknowledge and return your good offices."

I assured them, that I should be glad to have such good neighbours, and promised to return their visit before I went home.

They drank tea, and poor Isabella sent Susan several times to see what was become of me. She was told I was gone out on a visit, and would come to her in the evening. After they were gone, I sat with her
till

till supper-time; and then came down to Maurice and Charlotte. He went away at ten o'clock, and we went to our rest.

I returned the visit to the farm-house in the morning. Maurice shewed me his apartment, which is indeed a very good one. He consulted me about letting it. I advised him to keep it in reserve, for he might one day wish to return to it; and, beside, there might be disagreeable inmates to the family; and, upon the whole, it was better to leave it in the care of Mrs. Ringrose. She was pleased with what I said; and it was settled accordingly.

We staid twelve days at the mansion-house; and I had every reason to hope that my undertaking would be crowned with success.

Isabella was very loth to part with me; but I told her it must be so. But I purposed to return in a month; and desired

her to keep an account of the days, that she might observe my punctuality.

Mr. Maurice earnestly begged that he might see Isabella once more, before he took an eternal leave of her. I was averse to it.

“ If she sees you with me, I shall lose all the ground I have gained ; and, if you go alone, she will think I have told her nothing but untruths.”

“ Cannot I see her while she sleeps? I would not disturb her for the world.”

He ordered Susan to tell him when she was asleep. He put on a long black cloak of mine, and Susan's bonnet upon his head. Susan went softly into the room—I was in the gallery. He put his head into the room: he clasped his hands together, and gazed at her in silence. He sighed and groaned inwardly. He stood till she started, and then came away, and Susan shut the door. I persuaded him to go down stairs ;
and

and he saw her no more. He lamented the alterations in her person and intellects, and kept his resolution with unshaken steadiness.

The next morning we returned to N——; and from thence went home to W——, where I staid a month.

You know all that passed between Mrs. Martin and her family and myself.

Maurice sent me two writings, properly signed and executed. The first was a lease of three years of the mansion, and the ground adjoining: the other was a power of attorney to receive his rents, and the interest of his money in the funds, during Charlotte's minority.

These points being settled, I returned to the mansion-house; and arrived there on the day that my appointed month expired. I carried with me Charlotte Brady, and Patty Martin, as my companions and associates, with whom I hoped to form a

pleasant and chearful society, and that Donna Isabella would make the fourth in due time.

The lady gave me a joyful reception; but it suffered some abatement on account of my two companions. I told her she would find them very amiable and good girls, and they would amuse and entertain her: that they were likewise very ingenious, and would shew her many curious works. By degrees, she was reconciled to them; but she was rather jealous that I should love them better than herself, and deprive her of my company, and bestow it upon them.

My first act of power was to discharge the supernumerary servant, hired to assist Susan; my second, to throw her to her proper distance, and reduce her to her proper station, that of an house-maid.

Myself and my young people took her place about Madame di Soranzo. Our
business

business and exercises became her amusement : we shewed her how to nett, to knot, and to weave laces and bobbin. She had never been used to do any kind of work ; but these were so like play, that she was persuaded to try her hand at them.

I found Cob and his wife honest, sensible, and discreet persons ; and I put confidence in them. I regulated the household, and put every thing into an easy method ; so that every servant might do their work with ease, and yet have time for themselves.

Our manner of life was this : At seven o'clock in the morning, our half-pint of milk and water was brought to Donna Isabella and myself—we both found it of great benefit to us. At nine, we breakfasted in the dressing-room ; and afterwards pursued our works and our lessons till twelve. I then walked with the two girls till half after one ; when we returned home,

and dressed before dinner: for I used them to make some alterations, that they might not grow careless and flatteringly. We dined at two, or a quarter after: at first, we ate in the dressing-room, but afterwards in the parlour.

Isabella was sometimes capricious and fanciful: we then suffered her to dine alone in the dressing-room; and we left her with Susan. But she was too sensible of the value of our company to let us stay away from her: she soon recollected herself; and, sometimes, would apologize for her behaviour.

By degrees, I persuaded her to walk a little; for she had used herself to sit altogether, which had almost disabled her. She told me, that Mrs. Burton would not let her go out of her own apartment; and that Maurice desired her to stay there. I easily conceived the reason of this prohibition—while they were cleaning her former

mer room, and putting up the new door—but I thought it was now time that she should use her legs, and that her health should be promoted by exercise.

We persuaded her to walk in the gallery: sometimes she leaned upon me; at others, upon Patty; and Charlotte desired she might not have her offers of service refused.

I shut the door into the library, and left it to her to make the discovery of the alterations there. She often looked at the door, stopped, and sighed: at length, she said—
“Will you allow me, Madam, to open that door?”

“Certainly, Madam. I would not offer to restrain you in any thing but what was likely to be hurtful to you.”

She opened the door, and looked in. She started at seeing the new door. “Santa Maria! what do I see! Is there no admittance into that chamber?”

“ No, Madam. Captain Maurice ordered that room to be cleared of all its furniture; and then, shut it up, as you see.”

She kneeled down at the door, and prayed. She chanted, after the manner of the cathedral service—“ Saint Antonio, Ora pro nobis! Santa Catherina, Ora pro nobis!”

“ Come, my dear lady, this room is not good for you. Others, beside Mr. Maurice, think that chamber did you harm: you indulged fancies there that ruined your peace and comfort. Now that you are getting better, you will listen to advice; and, when your reason gets its full strength, you will be convinced that it was a kind action to take you away from it.”

She wept, and trembled. “ Oh, that room! the scene of all my joys and all my sorrows! I cannot see it without emotion—Must I never enter that room again?”

“ No,

"No, I hope not," said I: "but you shall use yourself to see that door, till you think no more of it than of any other; for you ought not to be a prisoner in your own house any longer. Let us go back to your dressing-room; and you shall come here again another day."

She leaned upon me, and we returned back again. She wept, but her mind was relieved by it. We talked on various subjects; and she soon recovered her usual composure.

After this, she visited the library every day; and, by degrees, was familiarized to it: but always said a prayer, or sung her "Ora pro nobis!" before she returned to her own apartment.

Her appetite returned. I never urged her to eat more than she chose. Nature requires but little food. Most of our disorders arise from repletion. I gave her

only simple and plain dressed meats, with a proportion of vegetables; and left the rest to nature.

Isabella had a closet out of her bed-chamber, where she used to pray several times in a day. I would now and then throw out a hint, that we all worshipped the same God, and acknowledged the same Saviour and Redeemer. As she grew better, she was more sensible of the difference between our mode of worship and her own. I insisted upon it, that we were Christians; and that she ought to allow us to be so, as we allowed her to be one.

I said, that the Christian church was divided into many branches, yet all springing from the same tree; namely, the Gospel—that every nation had it's own church, and had a right to it's own form of worship. That way in which a man thought he could best serve God, and secure his own salvation, that was the best to him. “ God

is

is the Father of all his creatures, and his tender mercies are over all his works. As such, I adore, love, and obey him; but I could not love him truly, if I thought he was the Father of only one small part, or one society only, and the Step-father of all the rest. I believe my national church to be a good and a safe one; but I do not believe it the only one in which I may obtain salvation. Compare my opinion with your own; and remark which has the most charity and benevolence, and which is the nearest to the charity of the Gospel, and the Spirit of it's Divine Author; who declared—" *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another.*"

"You speak very well," said Isabella; "but I am not convinced by what you say. I do not think every one has a right to chuse his own religion, but that all should conform to the Mother Church.

How can you be Christians, that pay no honour to the Mother of our Lord, nor to any of the Saints?"

I answered this, by adverting to our Lord's treatment of his Mother: a circumstance that one of our most celebrated divines attributes to his foreknowledge of the abuses of the successors of the Apostles, and that she would one day become the object of idolatrous worship. "It is from himself that we must learn every circumstance concerning her; and, from him, how far she is to be respected, but not worshipped. *"Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? Behold, he who doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."*

She was offended. She asked how I knew that our Saviour said so? I told her, we had free recourse to the Scriptures; and they were in the hands of every one that could read.

She

She doubted the translation. I told her, that the many sects into which Christianity was divided, were constantly watching each other, which prevented the corruptions and interpolations of any.

I asked whether she had now any priest to attend her? She was uneasy, at times, that she had not; but believed that Maurice had forbidden the person that used to visit her: which I thought very likely, though he said nothing to me upon the subject.

Thus I laboured to enlarge her charity, and to make her think favourably of Christians of all denominations, without trying to make her dissatisfied with her own church. I acknowledged the Pope's supremacy in Italy; but would not allow it to reach any farther. I told her, that a great man of our country had said, that Providence made the Italians Catholics, and
the

the Dutch Protestants, for the benefit and convenience of both.

Every evening, before we went to supper, I called the family together, and read the evening prayers of the Church; concluding with a prayer of the excellent Bishop Hoadly: and sometimes gave them a brief exhortation on the greater and lesser duties of all those who call themselves Christians.

Ifabella did not, at first, give us her company: it was near the expiration of the first year before I carried this point with her. But it gave me inexpressible satisfaction when she did join with us; and she now never misses it. She confesses that she has found great comfort to her own heart in performing this duty.

At the end of the first year, I returned to W——, according to my promise. I staid a month with Mrs. Martin; settled all her affairs; saw my friends in that neighbourhood;

hood; and then returned to Donna Isabella, who was very impatient of my absence.

I wrote to Captain Maurice from time to time; and gave him an account of Isabella's gradual amendment, and the prospect of her perfect recovery, in consequence of a mild and gentle treatment, and proper attention to her bodily health. His answers expressed his pleasure in hearing such good tidings; and his gratitude to Mrs. Darnford, for her care of the two persons most dear to him of any in the world. He informed me, that he was engaged in a mercantile society, and was going a voyage to the West Indies.

I wrote also to my worthy friend, Counsellor M——; and acquainted him with my present situation, and my success in it, which gave him great satisfaction.

In the second year of my residence here, I lost that dear, that inestimable friend, whose generosity extended beyond his life. He left

me

me five hundred pounds: a noble legacy, which secured me a competency for life.

Mrs. Langston gave me an invitation to her house; but I excused myself, and gave a power of attorney to a clerk of my benefactor, to receive my legacy, and employ it in the funds, and to receive and transmit my interest-money to me.

Isabella recovered, by degrees, her health and spirits; and she has often declared herself happier since I came hither than at any period of her life.

When I thought her sufficiently recovered, I asked whether she thought herself the wife of Captain Maurice? She said, she supposed that the marriage-ceremony had been performed, after our manner, while she was in fits: but she never could think herself his wife, unless it had been celebrated after the manner of the Church of Rome; and that could not be done
without

without her consent, which she never would give as long as she lived.

I then ventured to disclose the welcome secret, that she was not married at all; and that she was entirely her own mistress, and that of this house, and the lands belonging to it.

She screamed for joy. She embraced me. Then recollecting herself—"Are you sure of what you tell me?"

"Very certain of it."

"Yes—I believe it! You could not, would not, deceive me!—But how do you know it? Who told you?"

"He who best knew—Mr. Maurice confessed it to me. Moved by a generous remorse and repentance, he told me every thing that could give me full information of your case, and enable me to give you hope of future quiet. You may depend that he will never more persecute you: he
leaves

leaves you to enjoy your own comforts, and will never more disturb your repose."

"Then he is not so bad a man as I thought him."

I took up Maurice's cause, and pleaded for her pity and forgiveness; which, after some time, she allowed me to send him, in her name.

When he returned from his voyage, I transmitted this welcome news; but conditionally, that he should never more approach her: otherwise, she would declare to every body that she was not married to him, and would expose him to the censure and contempt of the world.

I shewed Madame di Soranzo two books I had made; in one of which I had set down all the money I had received on her account; in the other, all that I had expended for her. I told her, I had hitherto been her faithful steward; but was ready to resign my office whenever she pleased,
and

and to quit her house whenever she thought she had no farther need of me.

She had hardly patience to hear me out. She changed colour: she wept—"Surely, you could not be so cruel to leave me! If you did, I should relapse into the miserable state in which you found me. Oh, my dear friend! you must never, never leave me! You have been my comforter, physician, priest, companion, and counsellor—I can never forget my obligations to you—I can never be happy without you!"

"I am not going to leave you, unless you should desire it."

"So far from it, it would be the greatest misfortune that could befall me. Be still my steward, my manager, my governess—All I have is yours; and I am yours to the end of my life!"

I assured her, that I had no thoughts of leaving her, unless upon some extraordinary occasion.

With

With her health, Madame di Soranzo has recovered her beauty; and she is at this moment a most interesting person, equally capable of inspiring love, and of conciliating friendship.

My two pupils are amiable girls. Patty Martin is remarkably ingenious in all manner of needle-work. I had her taught to make gowns. We have modernized Donna Isabella's wardrobe; and I have dressed her hair in a medium style, between fashion and simplicity, but in a manner extremely becoming to her form.

When first I heard from the dear friend of my youth, I read your letters to Madame di Soranzo. She grew extremely jealous, lest I should leave her, and go to live with you. I told her, I would state the case fairly; and I could trust to your equity to decide in her behalf, though against your own wishes.

And

And now, my dear friend, you see the bands that hold me; and I am sure you will think that this lady has most need of my company and assistance. The two girls likewise depend upon me. Under these circumstances, I have thought on a plan that will bring us together. In the name of Madame di Soranzo, I invite you to visit us here, as soon as you can conveniently. I propose to myself the greatest pleasure I can enjoy, in making my personal acknowledgments for your generous and steady friendship. You must bring with you your daughter, and a servant to attend you here, for we have only the honest and vulgar Susan Dobbins; but I hope to get soon a more handy and suitable attendant. In your next, you must fix the time for your journey. I will meet you at N——, and conduct you safely to D——.

With

With the most ardent wish of embracing
you shortly,

I am,

Your ever obliged and faithful friend,

FRANCES DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

MRS. STRICTLAND, TO MRS. DARNFORD.

THANKS, many thanks, are due to my dear friend, for all her communications, and her most kind invitation in the conclusion.

Poor Isabella! her sufferings have been great indeed! I have felt them for her most truly. Oh, that vile Maurice!—how can you excuse him!—how can you vindicate him! I hate and detest him, and never can forgive him! And yet you have persuaded the poor lady to pardon him, and to let him know it! When I come, I will reckon with you for all your superlatives.

I want to consult you upon many subjects; principally, on the education of my children. Shall I send my daughter to a
good

good school, or shall I take a governess into my house? Shall I send my son to a public or a private school, or shall I give him a tutor at home? I have a scheme of this kind in my head, which I shall lay before you.

I have had my boys with me lately; and they are just restored to school again. They are very much improved; but Henry Marney has the superior talents. No matter for that: if my boy is virtuous and amiable, I am satisfied and thankful.

What strange, inconsistent creatures, we are! Woodlands, that was formerly my prison, is now become pleasant to me. I can spend the summer months here very comfortably; but I mean to winter in some large town or city. On this head I shall consult you also; and you shall be my Apollo.

Mrs. Elton's eldest son is a very ingenious young man: he is chosen a Fellow
of

of his College. He means to offer himself as a governor to some young man of fortune. He wishes to travel, and to instruct himself and his pupil at the same time. Whether travelling does most good, or harm, I am not competent to decide. Tell me your opinion of it.

I have regulated my family very much to my satisfaction; and all my servants acquit themselves well in their several stations—my worthy Gilson and her son at the head of them.

Present my respects to Madame di Soranzo: tell her, I hope she will admit me into the number of her friends. I am preparing to pay my acknowledgments, in person, for her kind invitation. I shall pay court to her good opinion; and shall do all I can to persuade her to return my visit at Woodlands. I shall open a plan of spending most part of our summer together; and, according to my success with

you both, I shall make my visit longer or shorter—Take notice of that.

On Monday next I set out on my journey. I hope to sup with you at N—— on Tuesday night. I suppose you will come in your chaise-cart to meet me. I shall put Peggy and our luggage into your vehicle, and you shall step into mine. On Wednesday, I shall proceed with you to D——. Heaven send us all a happy meeting, and all the following blessings of friendship and select society! So prays,

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

WOODLANDS,
July 5, 1780.

RACHEL STRICTLAND.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

MISS ELTON, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

MADAM,

IT is cruel to interrupt your happiness, in the society of that dear friend, whose noble and amiable qualities you so truly love, and so justly esteem: but, as you have honoured me with the office of your almoner, and your substitute, with respect to your pensioners and paupers, it is incumbent on me to acquaint you with something that has passed here, which has excited our expectations and our wishes.

In your absence, I have always called upon old Balderson once a week, at least, and desired him to call on me as often. On Monday last, he came to me, with a letter in his hand; and he trembled as he

gave it me to read, and seemed much agitated. I send you here a copy of it—

“ MR. SAMUEL BALDERSON,

“ I SHOULD be glad to know, speedily, whether you are dead or alive; for Mr. Grant, your old friend, says, he has not heard from you a great while; and he says, beside, that he has heard tidings of a friend of yours in India, and that there is some money for you in his hands. I write to you, at his desire; and, as soon as we know that you are alive and well, you shall know farther particulars.

“ I am your old neighbour and friend,

SOUTHWARK,
July 20.

“ JOHN MULLINS.”

Mr. Balderson had neglected writing to Mr. Grant, having given over all hopes of hearing from India. He had told him of his happiness in your protection, and that of his dear Henry Marney; and, after that, he

he wrote very seldom, having nothing farther to wish, or to hope, in this world.

My father thought this letter of great consequence; he offered to answer it himself. He certified the writer, that Samuel Balderfon was alive and well, and very desirous to be informed of the farther particulars as soon as possible; desiring him to address his next letter to Balderfon, at the Parsonage.

On the Friday we received the second letter; which I copy—

“ MR. BALDERSON,

“ WE have received an answer to our letter, from the Rev. Mr. Elton, rector of your parish, and are glad to hear you are alive and well; but it would have been more satisfaction to have had it under your own hand.

“ You must know, that John Mullins's

son, who was thought dead, is lately returned from India, with a great deal of money; and he says, that your son, James Balderson, was alive and well when he came away from Madras; and he sent home a hundred pounds for you; and he said, he had always sent that sum to you, every year, for a great many years past. He says, that Mr. James Balderson is coming home soon, and wants very much to know the situation of his family.

“ I send you herewith a Bank-note for fifty pounds; and desire you will acknowledge it directly, and with your own hand, if you are able, and then I will send the remainder.

“ Take care of your health, and keep up your spirits, for you may expect to see your good son one of these days. So God bless you, and farewell!

“ Your old and true friend,

SOUTHWARK,
July 27, 1780.

“ MICHAEL GRANT.”

This

This Mr. Grant lives in the house formerly inhabited by Balderfon, and he was charged with the care of all letters to him. The poor old man is overwhelmed with joy, but mixed with doubts and fears. My dear father kindly supports him; he calls upon him for fortitude to bear prosperity, as firmly as he has done adversity, and strengthens his mind by religious considerations. We visit him every day, and send him what we think is good for his health and spirits.

“ My father is of opinion, that Mr. James Balderfon is actually arrived, and takes this method to prepare his aged father to see him. If so, you shall soon hear farther from, dear Madam,

“ Yours, faithfully, &c.

“ ANNE ELTON.”

LETTER XVIII.

MISS ELTON, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

August 1, 1780.

MY dear father's penetration has been truly justified. I am, even now, hardly composed enough to tell my dear friend all that has happened: I will, however, attempt it.

Last Thursday, old Balderson dined with us: my father made him sit down with us, though his modesty would have declined it. In the afternoon, a stranger knocked at the door. Does not your heart tell you, already, who this stranger was?—The tears gush from my eyes; I cannot describe the affecting interview.

He asked a few questions concerning Mr. Balderson. The old man knew him; he fainted away in his son's arms. Never
did

did I behold such manly, such affecting tenderness, as James Balderfon's!

“ Oh, God! spare my father, that I may have somebody to live for!”

He was in agonies, lest the discovery should be too much for him; and we were in fear that he would not revive.

My father fetched a bottle of choice Madeira wine, reserved for great occasions. He said, in the words of the Wise Man—
“ Give strong wine to him who is ready to faint; let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” He gave it him with a tea spoon, with the utmost care, and he revived by degrees.

My father begged Mr. Balderfon to restrain his joy, and to appear composed.

The old man gazed wildly on his son—he embraced him. The tears ran down the cheeks of them both, and ours accompanied them.

The old man recovered his voice; and

his first words were ejaculations of gratitude to the Supreme Benefactor—"Praise be to God for all his mercies!—O Lord, make me truly thankful for this blessing!—Now will I say, like old Jacob to his beloved Joseph—" *Now let me die, for I have seen thy face once again!*"

My father, in order to compose the minds of both, began a recapitulation of all that old Balderson had suffered, till the time of his being received into the protection of Mrs. Strickland. He enlarged upon her goodness to him, and to his beloved Henry Marney.

While he was relating many instances of this lady's benevolence and bounty, Mr. James Balderson kneeled down, and invoked Heaven to shower down its blessings upon herself and children.

He then asked, where this excellent lady was to be found: he would go a journey as far as to India, to pay her his acknowledgments.

ments. My father desired him to have patience, and remain where he was: that the time Mrs. Strickland had proposed to be absent was nearly expired, and that he might soon pay his respects to her at her own house; and he would answer, that she would give him a hearty welcome, and a gracious reception.

My father would not let old Balderfon go home that night. His son sat by his bed-side, and watched him with true and pious filial affection. The next day, he was perfectly recovered. His son went home with him, and he spends most of his time with him, though my father has got him a lodging in the village.

And now, Madam, I am desired to remind you, that your proposed time is nearly expired, and that your return is impatiently wished; and I am authorized to speak my own wishes in those of others.

Oh! but I have not told you, that Mr.

James Balderson is a fine, manly, sensible-looking man; tall, and well made; with an open aspect, that speaks courage, frankness, and benevolence! His countenance is bronzed over, by a warm country; but his honest, generous, and affectionate mind, shines through it.

Accept, Madam, the compliments and regards of all those who bear the name of Elton; and I presume to ask you to present mine to all your friends at D——.

In hopes that Woodlands will soon be illuminated by your presence, (it is very dull without it) I am, dearest Madam,

Your faithful and obedient servant,

ANNE ELTON.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

MRS. STRICTLAND, TO MRS. DARNFORD.

THE voice of joy and gladness resounds throughout this house. I have been obliged to listen to raptures of praise and gratitude. I fear, lest vanity should induce me to take too much to myself; therefore I am retired to my own apartment, to offer the incense of praise and thanksgiving to that Power to whom it is due, and to thank him for enabling me to comfort and assist so many worthy hearts as are now under my roof.

This duty paid, it is incumbent on me to pay my acknowledgments to my dear friends, Donna Isabella, and Donna Francesca, for their kindness and hospitality to me and my daughter. My dear Rachel sends her thanks to the ladies, and her love
to

to Miss Brady and Miss Martin, and wishes to have them live with her always; for, sure, Woodlands is big enough for us all. Pray observe and remember this, and make no scruple of coming—all of you. I can always make room enough for such dear friends.

Mr. James Balderfon is one of *your gentlemen* of God's making: he gives the lye to all exclusive pretensions of birth and fortune. He has the spirit of a prince, and would make me such presents as are only proper for those of the highest degree to wear. He has obliged me to accept of some jewels of high value—one diamond, of a large size—and I must have quarrelled with him, if I had returned them to him. The man pays me a kind of homage that is little short of adoration!

You must know, that his chief traffick has been in jewels; and he has been engaged in journeys of much danger, between

tween the settlement at Madras and the mines of Golconda.

When his patron died, he left him one-third of his fortune, and the remainder to his relations in England. This honest factor transmitted accounts of every thing to them ; and employed a third person to divide the property, and to settle between them. He remitted all that was due to them, before he took measures to secure and remit his own property to England.

He has detected the fraud and treachery of his brother-in-law, Stevens, who intercepted all his remittances to his father, and suffered that worthy man to endure penury and want, while he was spending the money that would have procured him and his grandson all the comforts and conveniencies of life. He is little less angry with his sister. He says, though she had not the command of much money, she could have relieved her own father in many respects ;
and,

and, at least, she might have given him pence and twopences, as others did, from no other motive than merely charity. "I renounce such children and relations ! I will never more have any intercourse with them !"

He lamented the loss of so many dear relations, whom he had hoped should have shared his fortune ; but, still more pathetically, he deplored the fate of his adored Anna Marney.

You may remember the noble self-denial of this generous lover. If you do not, turn to my Letters, and to Balderson's history of himself and family. "If I had known her situation," said he, "I would have provided for the man she loved ; and he should have been my friend and brother during my life."

By these traits, you may judge of the heart of this noble fellow, who deserves all that fortune can bestow on him.

He was impatient to see his nephew. I
sent

sent for both the boys, the day after I came home : for Jonathan would have thought me unkind to leave him at school, while Henry came home; nor would I have lost the pleasure of my son's company.

There was a fresh effusion of gratitude on seeing his nephew dressed, educated, and treated, like my own son. He was charmed with the person and behaviour of the boy; and swore he should be provided for, like the heir of the house of Marney. He is not much less fond of my son: he thanks him for his affection to his nephew, and hopes it will last all their lives.

But you would be delighted with Henry Marney's behaviour to his grandfather. Though he sees his uncle in a situation to provide for him nobly, and with a heart and will to do it, all his attentions are to the old man; he is even jealous, lest he should think he can love any body equal to himself. He stands close to him; he
throws

throws his arms round his neck—"How are you, my dear grandfather? You have not spoken to me a long time! Tell me, that you are well and happy."

When his uncle was speaking of his obligations to me, the boy said—"I am sensible of all I owe to this dear lady; and to you, my honoured uncle: but still more than these are due to my grandfather—he bore me in his arms when I could not walk—he begged for me—he almost starved himself for me! Oh, that I may live to shew my gratitude to all my friends, but especially to my grandfather!"

"Dear, dear boy!" said the old man, "how am I rewarded!"

"You did more than all this, grandfather! You taught me to fear God, and to read his holy word, and to keep his commandments. It is from knowing these, that I am sensible of all my duties: first, to God; and, secondly, to my neighbour. All
other

other kinds of learning are as nothing, when compared to these!"

"God bless thee, and direct thee in his ways!" said old Balderson; "and make thee a blessing to others, as thou art to me!"

These worthy creatures are here every day. I cannot forbid them—I cannot limit them. Their visits are the incense of gratitude, and the emanations of sincere affection.

James Balderson is already laying plans for his nephew. "Since this estate is gone for ever from the family of Marney, I wish to build a house for Henry in this neighbourhood. I want to purchase some lands for this purpose. I wish him to be near you, Madam; and to be still the friend and companion of your amiable and beloved son. How shall I do this, without your assistance?"

I answered—"Consult Mr. Elton, and
he

he will direct you better than I can do. I wish the dear boys to be always each other's first friend."

He wanted me to sell him my cottages, and the ground about them; but I refused to part with them. They are consecrated to the service of the deserving and the unfortunate—they shall never be alienated from this purpose—I will secure them to it.

The Eltons are with me every day. I am very much obliged to them for their good offices during my absence.

How greatly preferable is this society to that of the world at large!

I am making alterations in my house. I have cleared out the old apartment on the first floor, had the tapestry taken down, and the old tattered velvet bed. The doors are new-hung and lifted; and they no longer chatter of a windy night. The rooms are to be hung with a light paper: they

they are already new-washed and painted. The picture of the cross Old-Lady I have sent up another flight of stairs; and she is in a room on the second story, where they are nearly as good as the first. In one room, I have put up a light green morine bed; in another, two canopy beds, for single persons, of printed cottons. The middle one is to serve as a dressing-room to both. They are all to be new-furnished; and I intend this apartment for you and your friends. Never fear crowding my family; for, as Rachel says, "Woodlands is big enough for us all."

I expect you next month. The autumn season is the favourite one with me. I desire you not to defer your coming. I have hopes of procuring you a servant, such as you wish for, to wait on Donna Isabella and yourself; therefore you need not bring Susan Dobbins with you to Woodlands.

The Eltons long to know and converse
with

with you. I mean to make your residence here so agreeable, that you shall have no wish to leave it in haste.

Suppose I should ask Mr. James Balder-son to build a house for you near us? You shall be his tenants, and my guests every day.

"I prattle out of season; and I doat
On mine own comforts."

SHAKESPEARE.

You can allow for all my flights and fancies. There is not a thought in my heart that I wish to conceal from you. For

I am always your's truly,

WOODLANDS,
August 21, 1780.

RACHEL STRICTLAND.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Share in all your joys and comforts, my dear friend! To be the minister of Heaven—to dispense it's blessings all around us, is the greatest honour a human creature can receive. You have a right to enjoy the sweet reflections arising from these actions. It is thus they raise us to the view of eternal bliss, far above all that the world can give or take away.

I had written to Captain Maurice, upon his return from the West Indies, acquainting him with our present situation, and desiring him to release Donna Isabella from all engagements to himself, by declaring, to all those who suppose them married, that his marriage was not a legal one,
and

and that they are both free to contract another engagement, in case they should chuse it.

I have received his answer, since you left us. He is displeased with me for urging this point, because it will hurt his character in this neighbourhood, where he has avowed his marriage. To her, and to me, he freely owns the deception; but he wishes to conceal it from the world. He has no wish to contract any new engagement, but desires to know, whether she has any thoughts of that kind: he confesses, it would give him pain to see her the wife of another; but, if she will tell him she wishes it, he will come over and release her.

There is nothing in this world that she dreads so much as the sight of him; and she would rather remain in the state she is. I shall urge him again, to release her by a written instrument; and represent that, in
case

case she should like to dispose of her estate here, she cannot do it without his concurrence. I have hopes, that I shall prevail upon him to perform this act of justice, and to set her free to act as she pleases.

I have letters from my friend Mrs. Langston. She urges me to stay some time with her, the ensuing winter. She has been robbed and cheated by her servants; and she begs of me to come and regulate her household, and she will follow my orders in her conduct towards them, in future.

She tells me, that Lady B—— returned home, a widow, near a year ago; that she has resided since at her country-seat, in L——; that Lord A—— has been her visitor and comforter; and, report says, they are soon to be married. I think, she is much too good for him, and with the tattling gossip, Report, may be a liar.

I wish I could engage some sensible and discreet woman, to take my place with my friend Isabella; that I might visit all my friends, and go and return to her as it might suit me. I wish this person to be a Roman Catholic; not a bigot, but one that would allow other Christians to go to heaven, as well as those of her own church. —Do you think such a Catholic is to be found? In that case, I would engage a priest to visit them, who knows nothing of Isabella's story; who should make her mind easy, and perform all the duties of her own church for her,

Is my scheme practicable, or is it not? I will consult your Mr. Elton. The vicar of our parish is an impertinent, gossiping man: I do not like him well enough to consult him on this subject.

And now, my dear friend, let me warn you of a danger, which you are not aware of.

of. Your new friend, Mr. James Balder-
son, is a fine person, endowed with a noble
mind, and enriched by the gifts of for-
tune.

My friend is, in person, a most desirable
woman, not past the age of conquest.
“ *He pays her a kind of homage, little short
of adoration!*” He opens his heart to her;
consults her upon all his plans, for himself
and his nephew. His gratitude gives him
a fair pretence to pay his homage conti-
nually, and neither of them suspect it for
any thing more. From a friend, thus ad-
mitted, thus encouraged, how easy is the
transition to a lover! Think of it, and be
prepared for whatever may happen. I
shall not be surprized at it.

We purpose to visit you next month,
unless any thing should happen to prevent
it; in which case, you will give us timely
notice.

Donna Isabella sends her best regards,
with those of

Your ever faithful and sincere friend,

F. DARNFORD.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

MRS. STRICTLAND, TO MRS. DARNFORD.

O H, Donna Francesina! you are a witch!—I will carry you before Mr. Elton, and have you weighed against the Church Bible. You are so light, that the experiment may be dangerous. It were a good deed to make you believe, that all your prognostics are fulfilled, and that you are invited to be a bride-maid. How comes it, that I cannot bear the idea of being lowered in your opinion for one hour; and that I dare not deceive you?—

“ There is a virtuous magic in your eye,
That, wherefoe’er it casts a beam of light,
Creates a blessing.”

SHIRLEY.

So I must tell you the truth, whether I chuse it or not.

James Balderson has thrown himself and his fortunes at my feet.

I suffered him to say all that was in his honest heart, before I offered to reply to him; and then, without a blush, without coquetry, or evasion, I answered him—

“ I am extremely sensible, Sir, of the honour you have done me; it is the greatest you could pay me, and demands my sincere acknowledgments. I am so circumstanced, that I cannot accept your generous offer; but, though I forbid the lover, I wish to preserve the friend. Listen to me, while I tell you the particulars of my situation.”

I then told him all the particulars of Mr. Strickland's will; and that I should forfeit the care of my children, and their fortune, by a second marriage. He had hardly patience to hear me out. He swore that my fortune was no object with him;

and

and that he wished I had no fortune at all, that he might prove it.

I begged him to hear me farther. I had only told him the circumstances that bound me, with respect to the world; but that I was with-held by much stronger and dearer ties—that I would not relinquish the care of my children, to be crowned the queen of the richest country upon earth—that it was incumbent on me to justify Mr. Strictland's good opinion, and to entitle myself to the love and respect of my children—that, if all these considerations could be set aside, I had resolved, for reasons respecting myself, never to marry again. "And now, my good Sir, it remains with you, whether to promise to give up all expectations of this kind, and to continue my friend, or to oblige me to forego your company."

"Oh, that is a cruel alternative!" said he. "Surely, I was born to be disappointed in all my wishes!"

“Not so, Sir,” said I; “you have been fortunate in your virtues, and in your use of them; and none knows them more than I do.”

“Oh, Madam! you have crushed all my hopes and wishes in the bud!—You know not yet all that is in this aspiring heart; but I fear to utter what remains.”

“After what you have said, Sir, you need not fear to say any thing. Let me, then, hear what remains: I will attend to it, and either encourage it, or give you good reasons to the contrary.”

“You dash me down with one hand, and raise me with the other. I must have some object in view, on which to build my future hopes, and exercise my faculties.”

“You see my nephew, Henry Marney, a fine promising lad. You have destroyed my first wish; my second rests upon him. I did wish, I did presume to hope, that,
when

when his education should be finished, and he had attained to manhood, you might one day give him the hand of your fair daughter, and make him your son in earnest. I had intended, on that day, to divide my fortune with him; and I am still ready to fulfil that intention, if you will deign to encourage this, the now favourite wish of my heart."

"My dear Sir! this wish is surely premature. Consider the age of these children, and the uncertainty of all sublunary schemes—but I am unwilling to crush all yours; I will wait to see whether time will promote them. If the young people should like each other, if they should prove worthy of each other, I will not refuse my consent to their union."

Balderfon kneeled, and clasped his hands together—"May the Almighty ratify and confirm this engagement!—I thank you, Madam: you have given me a subject for

my mind to work upon; and now I will not repine at any thing. I shall still be allowed to be your friend, and that of all your family."

"One thing, Sir, I must insist on, that you keep this treaty secret, and not mention it to any one—least of all, to the youth concerned it—for it would be likely to destroy the means that should lead to the accomplishment of your own wishes."

"Only one exception let me make, Madam. Suffer me to give a glimpse of this hope to my venerable father: it will be like a ray of the setting sun to illuminate a distant prospect; and it shall be under the strongest injunctions of secrecy, which I promise, for myself and him, shall be truly preserved."

"I accept this promise; and here let this subject rest. Let us now study how to complete the education of the two youths under my care.

"I am

“I am weighing in the balance, whether to send them to school again, or to take a private tutor into the house, and to trust them under his care. I shall consult you, Sir, in every step I take for your nephew’s service.”

“I shall agree to whatever you propose, Madam. We are already too much obliged for your kind offices to him; and you must take the lead in whatever relates to him.”

Here I thought proper to put an end to our conference; and I have since treated Mr. Balderson with more reserve, but not less respect and politeness.

The worthy man perceives that I am steady in my refusal of his offer, and that I keep him at a greater distance. He understands, and submits to it.

He staid away from the house two days. On the third, he came to enquire after my health, and that of all the family. He asked me to let the two boys walk out with

him. I gave leave; and invited his father and himself to dine here the next day. Mr. and Mrs. Elton met them. After dinner, I introduced the subject of public and private education. Much was said, that had often been said before; and Mr. Elton concluded, that a public school was more likely to produce eminent men, but a private education best calculated to bring up men for a private station, well instructed in the social and domestic virtues.

I wished Mr. Elton to decide for me with respect to my son: but he referred it to me; saying, both these methods had succeeded in some instances, and failed in others—that it belonged to me to decide in the present case.

I decided in favour of the private scheme. I asked Mr. James Balderson's opinion. He said, he entirely approved mine, and hoped his nephew would partake of the benefits of it. He said, he was ashamed
that

that I should have had all the expences of Henry's education; that he was able to sustain them, and equally ready to do it; that he insisted on repaying my part of it, and of taking the whole upon himself in future.

I said, I took it very ill that he should wish to deprive me of the merit of having served Henry Marney for his own sake: that I would hear nothing of the past; but I would allow him to be an equal sharer with me in all the expences on the account of the youths from this day forward.

He bowed, and was silent.

I then asked Mr. Elton, whether his son George was engaged? He was not, he said.

“ Then I engage him to take the care of our two young men. Mr. George Elton is an ingenious young man; he has had a liberal and expensive education. It is requisite that his time and attention should be

be properly estimated. Will you, Mr. Balderson, allow me to speak for you and myself?"

He bowed, and laid his hand upon his heart.

"Then, Sir, you shall pay him an hundred pounds a year, and I another. He shall be at home, in this house, and I will directly fit up an apartment for him and his pupils; and, as soon as it is ready, he may enter upon his office."

Mr. Elton bowed low, and looked as highly obliged. Mrs. Elton took my hand, and dropped a tear of gratitude upon it.

These silent emanations of the heart are more eloquent than words, and more sincere—

"For, in the modesty of silent Duty,
I read far more than in the rattling tongue
Of saucy and audacious Eloquence."

SHAKESPEARE.

James Balderson broke the interesting silence—"You told me, Madam, that you
would

would allow me an equal share of the young man's expences ; but you are a monopolizer—you take to yourself theirs and their tutor's board, and many other things. I protest against it."

" Have patience, Sir ; they will not always be at their lodgings here. I intend they shall make excursions in the summer-time, and get acquainted with their own country, before they see others."

" That I entirely approve," said Mr. Elton—" And will you, Madam, allow me to propose an addition to your plan ?"

" Certainly, Sir : you will do me an essential service."

" It is, that the young gentlemen shall visit every county in England and Wales ; observe the produce and the soil of every one ; the trade and manufactures of every great town, the beauties and the defects of it ; and thus be acquainted with more than the surface of things. After this tour is completed,

completed, I would have them go all over Scotland and Ireland, in the same manner, and inform themselves of every thing worth their knowledge through the whole extent of the British empire."

"Sir, I approve your plan entirely, and I will adopt it."

"In the mean time, Madam, I would have them study the laws, the government, and the constitution, of their country. I would have them read Blackstone's Commentaries, and learn to comment upon them. I would wish them to understand thoroughly whatsoever regards the welfare of their own country."

"I thank you, Sir: it will be my pride to second your instructions."

"By G—!" said James Balderfon, "it shall be at my expence, not your's."

"I will absolve your oath," said Mr. Elton, "and accept your offer."

"I thank

"I thank you, Sir. You will hear reason; but that lady will not."

"I will hear it for her, Sir; and will engage for her compliance with it."

We smiled; and the subject was imperceptibly changed to another.—And thus, my dear friend, are these important points settled.

I am now employed in fitting up an apartment on the second floor for Mr. George Elton and his pupils. There is a very large room that I intend for a family library. It is to be shelved all around, and furnished properly by Mr. Elton's assistance. I shall appropriate a sum yearly for this purpose. There is a good bed-chamber for the governor; another for the pupils, with two single beds in it, and suitable furniture.

Mr. Elton informs Mr. James Balder-son, that the proprietor of a farm in our parish, having heard that he wishes to purchase,

chase, has offered to sell it for much more than it is worth.

“ I will purchase it,” said Balderfon,
“ at any price.”

“ It will be as wise not to tell him so,”
said Mr. Elton. “ Will you trust me, Sir,
to treat for you ?”

“ Most readily, Sir: only do not let it
slip through your fingers.”

“ I will take care, Sir; and will do my
best for you.”

“ But do it, Sir, as soon as possible.”

James Balderfon is erecting a monument
in the church, to his father's honoured
friend, Henry Marney, Esq. another to
his son Reginald and his wife, and to his
sister, Anna Marney.

I have now to tell you, that your apart-
ment is quite ready to receive you. There
are fires in it every day; and the windows
are open from sun-rise to sun-set.

Woodlands will soon be fully inhabited.

It

It looks like a different place to what I once knew it. I have got you a servant; and she is in training under my Peggy.

You are to bring Donna Isabella, and both your adopted children. Who knows, but more future alliances may be schemed out? I could speculate upon the subject with much pleasure.

Let me know when you set out, that I may reckon the hours till your arrival.

Ever your's, faithfully,

RACHEL STRICTLAND.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

MRS. DARNFORD, TO MRS. STRICTLAND.

I Thank you truly for your last favour. I mind not your threats nor your coaxings. I never distrusted your judgment, nor your prudence; and your late conduct has justified them both.

I am pleased with the plan for your young men's education, and I am thankful for all your communications. It was right that I should know all these things before I came to Woodlands.

I have now to tell you, that Mrs. Langston is infallible in her intelligence. The marriage I mentioned in my last, is announced in the public papers. I have only to wish it may be happy.

Mrs.

Mrs. Langston urges me to come to her, as soon as I conveniently can. She throws out hints of her intention of settling her affairs, and making her will, and appointing me her executrix. I wish she had not mentioned these things: they will give an interested appearance to all the attentions I shall pay her, and I shall be the less forward to accept her favours.

We cannot make people behave as we wish them. Let us, then, take the world as it goes, and make every allowance for the defects and mistakes of it.

All of us have had our respective trials. You and I, Donna Isabella, and your truly venerable Balderfon. We have all worked our way through them. I trust, that we are all the better for them; and we certainly have the better title to the blessings that remain to us.

Let us enjoy them with gratitude and
humility,

humility, and with resignation and adoration to the Power that gives and takes away, as it pleases him; and hold ourselves in readiness to surrender them back again, whenever it pleases Him to call for them. Yet, we may firmly believe and trust, that all things work together for good to those who truly fear, love, and obey God.

We purpose to set out on our journey next Monday, and hope to be with you in the course of the week. Isabella begs we may go but short stages. She is fanciful, and supposes great fatigues in travelling to any distance.

The girls are all joy and gratitude for your very kind invitation. They reckon the hours, and minutes, till they shall enjoy Miss Strickland's company.

I have ordered the double door to be opened during our absence. The room is

to

to be new white-washed and painted. The old escritoire and bureau are to be sent up another pair of stairs, and the room furnished as a dressing-room. I have ordered a strong lock to be put on the outward door. When we return, I shall try the experiment. If Isabella should return to her whims and fancies, it will be locked up again, and the key will be lost; but I hope for better things.

She has left off praying to Saint Antonio, and seems to be in a sound state of mind; and, I hope, will continue so.

I will have no more haunted rooms here, any more than you have at Woodlands. The virtuous have nothing to fear. "*The wicked flee when none pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion.*" This belief is the best antidote to all unreasonable fears.

I long to see and converse with all
your

your friends; and to tell you, in person,
how much, how truly, I love and respect
you.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours, most sincerely and affectionately,

FRANCES DARNFORD.

FINIS.

30 AU 65

